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## HUMAN LEOPARDS





SACKVILLE STREET, FREETOWN,

# HUMAN LEOPARDS

AN ACCOUNT OF THE TRIALS OF HUMAN LEOPARDS  
BEFORE THE SPECIAL COMMISSION COURT; WITH  
A NOTE ON SIERRA LEONE, PAST AND PRESENT

BY

K. J. BEATTY

OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE, BARRISTER-AT-LAW  
FOR SOME YEARS RESIDENT IN SIERRA LEONE

WITH A PREFACE BY

SIR WILLIAM BRANDFORD GRIFFITH

33 Illustrations

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## PREFACE

CAPTAIN BEATTY, just before leaving for the Dardanelles, asked me to write a preface. I think that the best preface will be to answer, as far as I am able, several questions which were frequently put to me on my return to civilization after the conclusion of the Special Commission Court. These questions were, "What was the object of the Human Leopard Society? Were its members cannibals for the purpose of satisfying an appetite for human flesh, or was it some religious rite? Would the sentences inflicted by the Special Commission Court have the effect of stamping out the horrible practice?"

The first question can be answered with some confidence. The trend of the whole evidence showed that the prime object of the Human Leopard Society was to secure human fat wherewith to anoint the Borfima. The witnesses told us how the occasion of a murder is used to "blood" the Borfima, but the potency of this terrible fetish depends upon its being frequently supplied with human fat. Hence these murders.

The question as to cannibalism it is not possible to answer with any degree of certainty. The Commission sat for over five months, had before it

hundreds of witnesses, and the notes of evidence ran into thousands of pages ; but the Court was a judicial tribunal, and it was anxious to bring its labours to an end as speedily as possible, so that no question was asked or allowed by the Court which was not relevant to the issue. Again and again answers given by witnesses opened up avenues which it would have been most interesting to investigate, but, unless the investigation was relevant to the case in hand or would have served to elucidate some other part of the evidence which was doubtful, the Court could not allow it to be pursued. Nor would it have been seemly for the members of the Court to make private investigation into a matter before them judicially. Consequently we could not probe down and ascertain the reason of things, but had to be content with the bare facts which came out by way of evidence.

Moreover, although it was possible to have a fair idea as to whether a witness was generally speaking the truth or not, it was extremely difficult to lay one's finger on any detail and be satisfied as to its reasonable correctness. Furthermore, whenever a witness approached cannibalism he palpably made reservations or additions, whilst at all the more interesting junctures we had to keep severely in mind that we were not holding a scientific inquiry but were a judicial tribunal having as the sole issue before us whether the deceased was murdered by the prisoners in the dock in connection with an unlawful society. Consequently, notwithstanding the time spent over the different trials, and despite the fact that whenever the subject of cannibalism came up the Court was keenly on the alert to fathom its objects, it is

not possible to state definitely why the members of the Human Leopard Society ate their victims. There was, however, one outstanding fact : all the principal offenders were men of mature age, past their prime ; they were the ones who, so to speak, managed the concern, who arranged for victims, and who received the most coveted portions of the slaughtered bodies ; and I formed the opinion that when they devoured the human flesh the idea uppermost in their minds was that they were increasing their virile powers.

There is no sentence in the notes of evidence which I can quote in support of this theory, but after an extended experience of the point of view of the West African mind, and with some acquaintance with the subject on the spot, I venture the opinion that the Human Leopards eat the flesh of their victims, not to satisfy any craving for human flesh nor in connection with any religious rite, but in the belief that their victims' flesh will increase their virility.

Whether that was the original idea when the first person fell a victim to the Human Leopards may be questioned. Cannibalism is probably only a by-product in these murders. Originally it may have been to bind the murderers together and so preserve inviolable secrecy that each member of the Society partook of a portion of the flesh ; or it may have been to continue the leopard-acting, i.e. by devouring the prey ; or it may have been with a combination of these ideas that cannibalism originated. Gradually, however, the notion arose that human flesh had specific virtues ; as the Borfima's energy was replenished with human fat so would the cannibal be reinvigorated with other parts of the human body ;

and possibly during the last few decades the value placed upon human flesh was equal to or even exceeded that set upon human fat. Such an explanation would help to account for the expansion and increased activity of the Society during the past twenty years.

Then comes the question whether the punishments inflicted by the Special Commission Court will have the effect of stamping out the Society. In considering this question the environment of the people must be taken into account. I have been in many forests, but in none which seemed to me to be so uncanny as the Sierra Leone bush. In Mende-land the bush is not high, as a rule it is little more than scrub, nor is the vegetation exceptionally rank, but there is something about the Sierra Leone bush, and about the bush villages as well, which makes one's flesh creep. It may be the low hills with enclosed swampy valleys, or the associations of the slave trade, or the knowledge that the country is alive with Human Leopards; but to my mind the chief factor in the uncanniness is the presence of numerous half-human chimpanzees with their maniacal shrieks and cries. The bush seemed to me pervaded with something supernatural, a spirit which was striving to bridge the animal and the human. Some of the weird spirit of their surroundings has, I think, entered into the people, and accounts for their weird customs. The people are by no means a low, savage race. I found many of them highly intelligent, shrewd, with more than the average sense of humour, and with the most marvellous faculty for keeping hidden what they did not wish to be known—the

result probably of secret societies for countless generations. But beyond such reasoning powers as are required for their daily necessities their whole mental energies are absorbed in fetish, witchcraft, "medicine" such as Borfima and the like. What they need is a substitute for their bottomless wells of secret societies, for their playing at being leopards or alligators and acting the part with such realism that they not only kill their quarry but even devour it. In my opinion the only way to extirpate these objectionable societies is the introduction of the four R's—the fourth, Religion, being specially needed to supply the place of the native crude beliefs. No doubt the energetic action of the Government, and in a lesser degree the labours of the Special Commission Court, will have a good effect; but, I fear, only a temporary effect. The remedy must go deeper than mere punishment: the Human Leopard Society must be superseded by Education and Religion.

W. BRANDFORD GRIFFITH.

2, ESSEX COURT, TEMPLE,

*September, 1915.*





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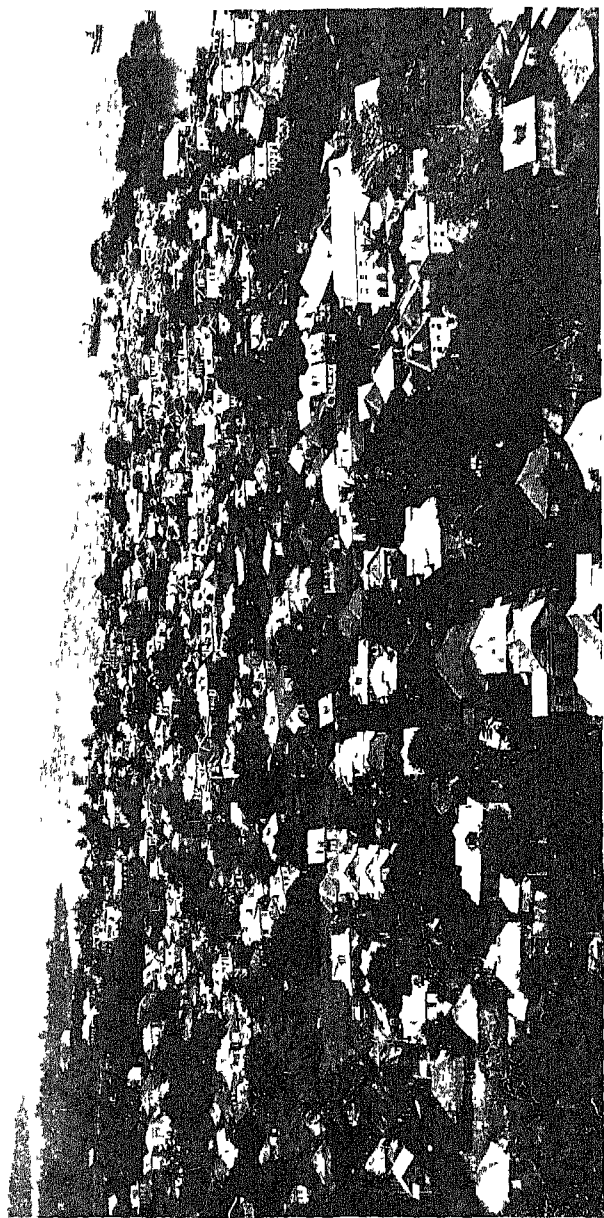
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VIEW OF FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE.

# HUMAN LEOPARDS

## PART I

### CHAPTER 1

#### INTRODUCTORY

THAT there were cannibals in the Hinterland of Sierra Leone in former days appears from the observations <sup>1</sup> of William Finch, who visited Sierra Leone in August, 1607. This accurate observer states, "To the South of the Bay, some fortie or fiftie leagues distant within the Countrey, inhabiteth a very fierce people which are man-eaters, which sometimes infest them." This clearly points to the Mende country, where the Human Leopard Society was lately flourishing. Finch does not, however, refer to anything but pure cannibalism.

In 1803 Dr. Thomas Winterbottom, the Colonial Surgeon, Sierra Leone, wrote an account of the native Africans in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone, and, after quoting and criticizing various authorities who had alleged the existence of cannibalism in different parts of West Africa, states (vol. i. p. 166) as follows :

"That this horrid practice does not exist in the

<sup>1</sup> These observations, to be found in vol. i. of Samuel Purchas's "Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes, containing a History of the World, in Sea Voyages, and Lande Travells," by Englishmen and others, are printed in full at p. 94.



neighbourhood of Sierra Leone, nor for many hundred leagues along the coast to the northward and southward of that place, may be asserted with the utmost confidence, nor is there any tradition among the natives which can prove that it ever was the custom; on the contrary, they appear struck with horror when they are questioned individually on the subject, though at the same time they make no scruple of accusing other nations at a distance, and whom they barely know by name, of cannibalism."

Joseph Corry<sup>1</sup> (1806) hints at human sacrifices, but neither he nor Major Laing<sup>2</sup> (1822) heard anything of cannibalism, whilst Harrison Rankin<sup>3</sup> (1834), who appears to have made considerable inquiry into the matter, and who speaks of "slavery, cannibalism and polygamy" as being deemed domestic virtues in the wilds of Africa, specifically mentions the only definite and well-ascertained case of cannibalism which came to his notice; it was the case of a liberated resident (i.e. a native African liberated from a captured slaver) who had wandered in the bush and had killed another native for food. Rankin in conclusion states, "In the heterogeneous commixture of tribes in the British Colony, I discovered none which doubted the practice of cannibalism, but none of the established residents would plead guilty to the charge themselves or admit it of their own nation.

<sup>1</sup> "Observations upon the Windward Coast of Africa, the Religion, Character, Customs, etc., of the Natives, etc. etc., made in the years 1805 and 1806," by Joseph Corry, 1807.

<sup>2</sup> "Travels in the Timmanee, Kooranko, and Soolima Countries in Western Africa," by Major Alexander Gordon Laing, 1825.

<sup>3</sup> "The White Man's Grave, a Visit to Sierra Leone in 1834," by F. Harrison Rankin, 1836.





A TFMNE GIRI.

They generally agreed in attributing it to the savages of the river Bonny."

The first trace of human leopards appears in the following quotation from Bishop Ingham's "Sierra Leone after a Hundred Years," published in 1894. The Bishop writes at p. 272: "The Temnes believe that by witchcraft a man may turn himself into an animal, and, in that form, may injure an enemy. A man was burnt at Port Lokkoh in 1854 for having turned himself into a leopard." His lordship, who went to Africa about thirty years and who wrote about forty years after the event above mentioned, would probably have heard of this fact through Christian natives who (even if they had known the real reason for the burning) would have been keen to put it to the account of witchcraft; but taking into consideration the frequent criticisms of Temne "boys" at Gbangbama during the sitting of the Special Commission Court that it was absurd to waste so much time over the prisoners, but that we ought to burn all the persons charged with human leopard offences together with their villages and families, and so stamp out the practice as it had been stamped out in the Temne country, it seems more than probable that the man was burned not for witchcraft but as a human leopard.

The first definite reference to human leopards is to be found in Banbury's "Sierra Leone; or, the White Man's Grave," 1888. At p. 183 he says: "Secret cannibalism is also prevalent, though the native punishment for this custom is death, and in the Mendi Mission (an American society) they possess the skin of a large leopard, with iron claws, which

had once been the property of a man who, under this guise, satisfied his horrible craving." This clearly refers to human leopard activity.

Mr. Alldridge,<sup>1</sup> who has had a long and intimate acquaintance with the Mende tribes, is of opinion that the Human Leopard Society is of no great age, probably not more than half a century. All, however, that can be said with certainty is that until comparatively lately the operations of this society, if it existed, were so limited or so secret that the Society was unknown to Europeans, or indeed to Africans who were in touch with Europeans.

In 1891 the report from the Mende country that a number of cannibals had been burnt to death came as a shock to the Executive. The existence of the practice of cannibalism was known, but there was no idea that there was cannibalism on such a large scale. It seems that the inhabitants of the Imperri chiefdom had suffered so heavily at the hands of the cannibals that they complained to their chief. The complaints becoming too numerous and too insistent to be disregarded, the chief called a meeting, and the big men of Gangama, Gbangbama, Yandehun, and other towns and villages met at Bogo. Here the question of cannibalism was discussed, and those present were informed that a number of Tongo players<sup>2</sup> had been summoned for the purpose of discovering the cannibals, the guilty parties no doubt depending upon their Borfima<sup>3</sup> and bribes to escape detection. On the appointed day the Tongo players arrived. A

<sup>1</sup> "The Sherbro and its Hinterland," by T. J. Alldridge, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 23.

huge fire was lighted, and the Tongo players were directed to throw into the fire all persons whom they found to be cannibals. One of the first to be cast into the flames was the principal chief who had been instrumental in calling in the Tongo players, and it is asserted that as many as eighty persons were burnt to death, a number of them anticipating their fate and of their own accord throwing themselves into the flames. A mercantile agent who visited Bogo shortly after this terrible retribution reported that the spot where the burning took place was a sickening sight, with its heaps of white ashes and remains of human bodies, whilst Mr. Alldridge, who held an inquiry into the matter, says that the pyramid of calcined bones which he saw at the junction of two roads just outside Bogo was about four feet high.

But the Government could not view with indifference such a crude and barbarous administration of justice, and on the 5th May, 1892, issued the following proclamation :

“WHEREAS from time to time in the Imperri Country and elsewhere within the Colony of Sierra Leone there have been native plays or dances commonly called or known as ‘Tongo Play,’ whereby some of the inhabitants of the said Colony have been accused of and denounced as being ‘Human Leopards,’ or as guilty of various crimes and misdemeanours, and upon such accusation and denouncement they have been unlawfully burnt to death or otherwise illegally punished :

“NOW THEREFORE His Excellency the Administrator of the Government of the Colony aforesaid doth hereby publish, proclaim, and make known—

“ That from and after this date the play or dance of the Tongo People commonly called and known as ‘ Tongo Play,’ being contrary to law, must at once cease throughout the Colony.

“ That every Tongo person is hereby enjoined and required to quit the Colony within twenty-one days from the date of this Proclamation on pain of being arrested, detained, and deported as a Political Prisoner :

“ That every person taking part in any ‘ Tongo Play ’ or action resulting thereupon will be prosecuted and punished according to law :

“ And all the inhabitants of and sojourners in the Colony are hereby enjoined to govern themselves accordingly.”

With all dread of the Tongo players removed, cannibalism burst out afresh towards the end of 1894, and at the beginning of 1895 a number of murders took place. It was then definitely ascertained that these murders had been committed by members of a society which afterwards became notorious as the Human Leopard Society. To deal with this extraordinary class of crime the Government of the Colony of Sierra Leone decided that drastic and exceptional legislation was necessary, and a Bill entitled the Human Leopard Society Ordinance, 1895, was introduced and passed as Ordinance No. 15 of 1895.

The object of the Ordinance was set out in the preamble, which read as follows :

“ WHEREAS there exists in the Imperri Country a Society known by the name of the Human Leopard Society formed for the purpose of committing murder :

“ AND WHEREAS many murders have been com-

mitted by men dressed so as to resemble leopards and armed with a three-pronged knife commonly known as a leopard knife or other weapon :

“ AND WHEREAS owing to the number of these murders, and the difficulty of detecting the perpetrators of the same, it is expedient to amend the law :

“ Be it therefore enacted by the Government of the Colony of Sierra Leone with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council thereof as follows ” :

Then followed provisions making it penal for any person without lawful excuse to have in his possession or keeping any of the articles mentioned in the Schedule, viz. :

“(a) A leopard skin shaped so as to make a man wearing it resemble a leopard ;

“(b) A three-pronged knife ; and

“(c) A native medicine known as ‘Borfima’ ” ; and under the Ordinance the police were given powers where there was reasonable ground of suspicion to arrest and to search without a warrant, and heavy penalties were imposed for obstructing the police.

On the 9th October, 1896, a Protectorate was proclaimed over that portion of the Hinterland of the Colony of Sierra Leone which had hitherto been merely under the control of the Colonial Government.

Up to this date, for more than half a century, the Government of the Colony had claimed and exercised the right of intervention in disputes which led to inter-tribal wars or which interfered with the trade routes from the interior, but beyond this and the efforts made to stop slave-raiding there had been very little interference with the Hinterland natives.

During the same year it was found necessary



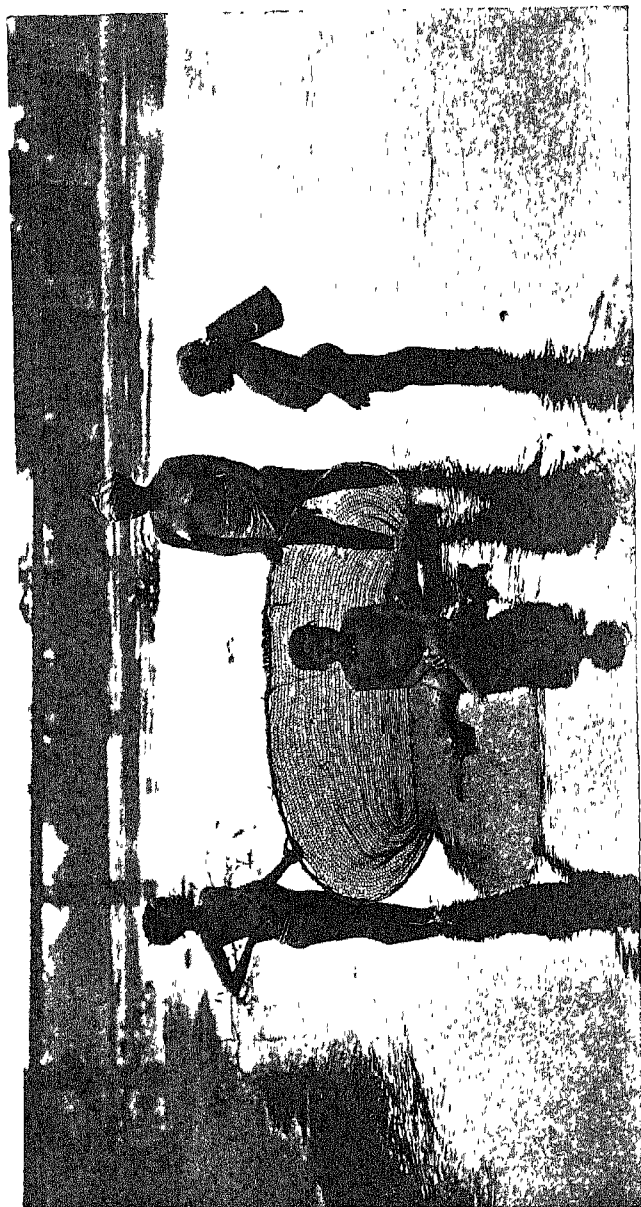
further to strengthen the hands of the Executive in dealing with crimes committed by members of secret societies, and the Human Leopard Society Ordinance of 1895 was added to, provision being made whereby any chief who was proved to have permitted or who failed to report within a reasonable time any celebration of Human Leopard Customs which had occurred in any place under his control was liable to heavy penalties.

Under the amended law the Governor-in-Council was given power to order the arrest and detention of chiefs when it was deemed expedient to do so for the preservation of peace and order and the suppression of the Human Leopard Society. Power was also given to the Governor-in-Council to deport any such chief from the British sphere of influence in Sierra Leone. The reason for the latter enactment seems to have been that it was considered impossible for the Society to flourish without the connivance of at least some of the chiefs in the part of the territory affected.

It appeared that while some chiefs had been most active in their support of the Government, others had given no assistance or had even put obstruction in the way of investigating charges by refusing to deliver up witnesses and by allowing them to leave the country, with the result that in many cases it was difficult to bring offenders to justice. Prosecutions, however, took place from time to time for offences against the Ordinance, and in a number of cases convictions were obtained on capital charges as well as in lesser offences against the Ordinance.

During investigations connected with the offences committed by members of the Human Leopard Society,





OBLIVIOUS OF HUMAN ALLIGATORS.

it came out that another secret society existed known as the Human Alligator Society. This Society appears to have been an offshoot of the Human Leopard Society and the usual meeting-place of this new society was in the vicinity of rivers where crocodiles or as they are called locally alligators abound.

Thereupon the law was further amended in 1901, and it was made a felony for any person without lawful authority or excuse to have in his possession, custody, or under his control an alligator skin shaped or made so as to make a man wearing the same resemble an alligator.

During the year 1903 a Circuit Court, presided over by a judge who sat with assessors, was constituted, and after that date all offences against the Human Leopard and Alligator Society Ordinances were tried by that Court. From that date up to the middle of 1912 there were before the Circuit Court 17 cases, in which 186 persons were charged with murder under the above-mentioned Ordinances; of these persons 87 were convicted and sentenced to death, and in many cases the sentence was duly carried out publicly in the vicinity of the place where the murder was committed.

In July, 1912, a murder took place at Imperri; the murderers were disturbed at their work; a man who was patently concerned in the murder, but was not one of the actual murderers, was arrested; upon this man's shoulders the murderers threw the whole burden of explanation. Unable to invent even a plausible explanation, he made a clean breast and gave the names of those implicated in the murder. In the course of his explanation other murders were

referred to and other names were mentioned, with the result that further arrests were made, whilst other members of the Society whom he named turned King's evidence. In this way the authorities obtained information with respect to about 30 human leopard murders since 1907, and between 300 and 400 persons, including several paramount chiefs (Mahawas) and a large number of sub-chiefs (Mahawurus), were arrested. As in many cases no corroborative evidence was procurable, the majority of these persons were released, leaving 108, who were committed for trial.

To meet some of the difficulties which had arisen, the Government thereupon brought forward two Bills, one of which extended and strengthened the existing law as to unlawful societies, whilst the other set up a special court for the trial of persons charged with offences connected with unlawful societies, and authorized the deportation of persons who, although acquitted by such court, were, in the opinion of the court, a source of danger to the peace of the district. The Attorney-General, in introducing the first Bill into the Legislative Council of Sierra Leone, said :

"It will be within the knowledge of Honourable Members of this Council that the operations of the Human Leopard Societies in the Protectorate—chiefly in the Northern Sherbro District—have been lately very active.

"Not only have many murders been committed this year in connection with the Human Leopard, but murders which have been committed within the last three or four years have only just come to light. I can say that, so far as I know, there are over twenty murders at least in connection with this Society

perpetrated this year or within the last three or four years just recently come to light. This is a very serious state of affairs, and one that has to be dealt with in a drastic manner. As far as my knowledge of this Society goes, twenty years ago its operations were confined to, not the big men of the Protectorate, but lesser people ; in fact, it was the paramount chiefs who took part in trying to suppress the Society. However, it seems as years have gone by, this state of things has changed, either from natural inclination or from force of circumstances, and the Society has become too strong for the chiefs, with the result that the paramount chiefs themselves have been drawn into the Society and are now the leaders of it.

“Section 2 of this Ordinance gives the Governor power, when any murder has been committed in any chieftdom, to declare such chieftdom or any part thereof to be a proclaimed district, and gives the District Commissioner power to arrest anybody therein. In the past the Government’s chief difficulty has been to get evidence to substantiate a prosecution, as it is generally after a long time that people come forward to make statements about these murders, and, owing to the intimidation practised by the influential chiefs upon possible witnesses, the Government have always encountered great difficulty in procuring witnesses to bring to justice the perpetrators of the crime. It will be seen by Section 2 the District Commissioner has power to arrest any person whose arrest and detention he may consider advisable in the interests of justice ; the first person he will naturally arrest would be the chief of the district.

“This power seems drastic, but the circumstances

of these murders are so exceptional that drastic powers are required. Honourable Members will remember that in the Principal Ordinance it is a serious offence to be in possession of certain articles. It is proposed to add three other articles which will be seen detailed in Section 7. Up to the present, the possession of certain articles has been necessary to enable the District Commissioner to deal with persons who are known to be active members of the Human Leopard Society. It is now made criminal for a man to be a member or to take any part in the operations of this Society. These are the two chief points in the Bill. Another addition is that by Section 5 which gives power to the Governor to deport a man who has been connected with this Society, and, if he is an alien, to banish him permanently from the Colony. As the District Commissioners have been obliged to arrest a good many persons for whom it may not be possible to formulate any charges, Honourable Members will see from Schedule 9 that there is an indemnity clause covering all the arrests which have been made."

The three articles mentioned by the Attorney-General are described in the Ordinance as :

"(a) A dress made of baboon<sup>1</sup> skins commonly used by members of an unlawful society ;

"(b) A ' kukoi ' or whistle commonly used for calling together the members of an unlawful society ;

"(c) An iron needle commonly used for branding members of an unlawful society."

<sup>1</sup> This was owing to the fact that a society known as the Human Baboon Society had been discovered to exist in one of the Northern Districts of the Protectorate.

In introducing the Special Commission Court Ordinance into the Legislative Council the Attorney-General said :

“ This Bill gives the Governor power to constitute special courts for the trial of all offences under the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Ordinance, 1909, and also the Ordinance (the Human Leopard and Alligator Amendment Ordinance, 1912) which has just been read a second time. I may say that the usual way of trying offenders in the Protectorate is by the Circuit Court with three or four Native Paramount Chiefs, but as a great number of these chiefs are implicated and have been arrested in the Protectorate, it is obvious that the services of many, if any at all, will not be available. Moreover, there are 64 persons under trial. It will take up too much of the time of the Circuit Judge if all were sent for trial before the Circuit Court. The Governor has the power to appoint Commissioners, usually men who are Senior District Commissioners. However, it is not desirable to appoint Commissioners in the ordinary way to try offences like these. Instead of the prisoners being tried by the Circuit Judge in the ordinary way, they will be charged before a special court of three Judges.

“ It is proposed in the Bill, which I may point out will only be in operation for one year, to appoint a Special Commission Court consisting of three persons. Who they are or who they will be I cannot say ; but I can say that they must be either judges or barristers of a British court.

“ The Bill also provides that there must be unanimity before a prisoner can be convicted. The

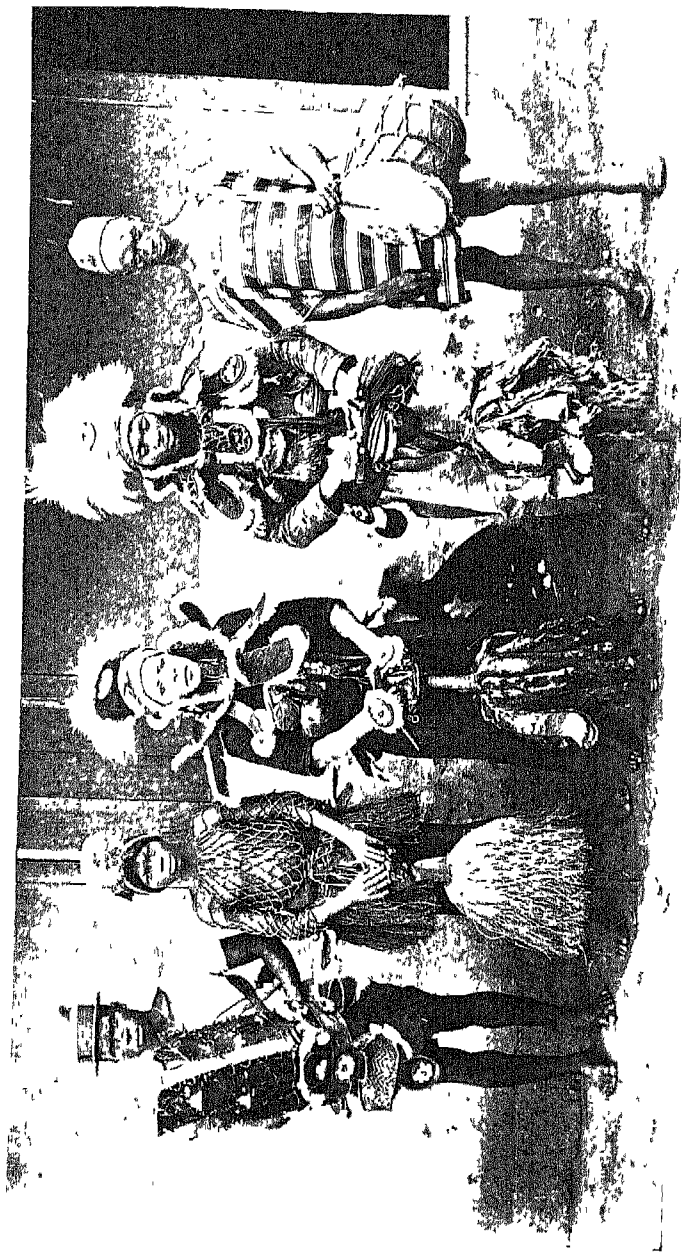


procedure will be practically the same as that of the Circuit Court, and all the procedure of the Circuit will be followed.

“It will be observed in Clause 10 that the same powers of deportation will be given to the Governor when dealing with prisoners convicted by the Special Commission Court as with those convicted by the Circuit Court. By Clause 11 further power is given to the Governor. Unfortunately, it sometimes happens in these cases that there are several persons who are more or less connected with these Societies, but against whom there is no evidence; they will be simply ordered to leave the Colony and will not be allowed to return.”

The Colonial Office were fortunate in being able to secure the services of an able and distinguished lawyer and judge in the person of Sir William Brandford Griffith, an Ex-Chief Justice of the Gold Coast Colony, to be President of the Court, and he arrived in the Colony from England on the 8th December, 1912.





PORO DEVILS.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PORO, TONGO PLAY, BORFIMA, WITCH-DOCTORS, OATHS

#### THE PORO

ALTHOUGH it is impossible to say that the Human Leopard Society is connected with the Poro, nevertheless any account of that Society would be wanting unless accompanied by some reference to the Poro, one of the secret societies by which the natives of the Sierra Leone Hinterland are educated and were, until the British Government took over the administration of the country, ruled. Mr. Migeod, in the *Journal of the African Society* for July, 1915, ventures the suggestion that Purrus Campus in Ptolemy's map of the second century may be no other than the Latin for Poro bush; and everything points to the custom being of great antiquity. The earlier writers on Sierra Leone dwell almost exclusively upon the predatory habits of the Poro and the danger of trespassing into the Poro bush, but Major Laing (1822), who travelled amongst the Hinterland tribes to the north of Sierra Leone, also points to the fact that it was the Poro which governed the country. He says:

“Particular pieces of ground (generally eminences covered with thick wood) are consecrated to the Greegrees and held sacred. I have always seen those

enclosures approached with reverential awe, and have been informed that the smallest encroachment upon them would subject the aggressor to the most awful punishment from the Purrah, an institution which is much dreaded by the whole of this unhappy country. Their power supersedes even that of the headmen of the districts, and their deeds of secrecy and darkness are as little called in question, or inquired into, as those of the inquisition were in Europe, in former years. I have endeavoured in vain to trace the origin or cause of formation of this extraordinary association, and have reason to suppose that it is now unknown to the generality of the Timannees, and may possibly be even so to the Purrah themselves, in a country where no traditionary records are extant, either in writing or in song.

“In the early ages of the slave trade (which particularly prevailed in this country) every nefarious scheme was resorted to by the headmen for the purpose of procuring subjects for the markets. It may be conjectured that where liberty was so insecure concealment not difficult, and the means of subsistence easy to be procured, and when the power of the headmen did not extend beyond the limits of their own town, many individuals, whose safety was endangered, would fly to the woods for protection; and as their numbers increased, would confederate for mutual support, and thus give rise to secret signs of recognition and rules of general guidance. It may further be supposed, that in a country divided amongst numerous petty authorities, each jealous of the other, such a confederacy may soon have become too powerful for any probable combination against them;

and being possessed of power would at length employ it in the very abuses to which it had owed its own origin.

“The headquarters of the Purrah are in enclosures situated in the woods; these are never deserted by them entirely, and any man, not a Purrah, approaching them is instantly apprehended, and rarely ever heard of again. The few who have reappeared after several years of seclusion have always become immediately Purrah men themselves; those who do not again appear are supposed to be carried away to distant countries and sold. The Purrahs do not confine themselves always to the seizure of those who approach their enclosures, but frequently carry off single travellers, and occasionally whole parties, who are imprudent enough to pass from one town to another in certain districts without applying for an escort from the body. To ensure safety, one Purrah man is sufficient, who, while leading the party, blows a small reed whistle suspended from his neck. At the advice of Ba Kooro, I procured one of these persons as a guide from Ma Bung to Ma Yasoo, the intermediate country being thickly inhabited by the Purrah. As we passed along, they signified their vicinity to us, by howling and screaming in the woods, but although the sounds denoted their neighbourhood, no individual was seen.

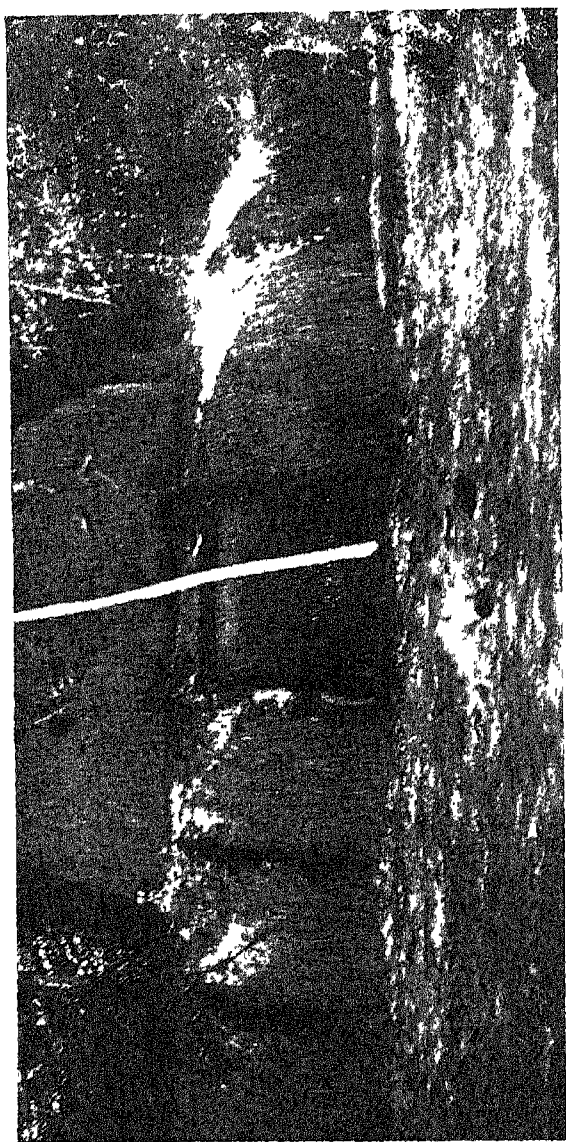
“The Purrahs frequently make an irruption into towns in the night-time, and plunder whatever they can lay their hands upon—goats, fowls, cloths, provisions, men, women, or children. On such occasions the inhabitants remain shut up in their homes, until long after the plunderers retreat. During the time

that I was in the interior, I always had a sentry over my quarters at night, for the protection of the baggage. One night, the town in which we slept was visited by the Purrah, and my sentinel remained firm at his post. When the Purrah came up, an attack was made upon him, but the application of the bayonet kept them at a distance until I made my appearance, when the Purrah, uncertain of their power over a white man, scampered off; they were mostly naked and unarmed, but a few had knives.

“The outward distinguishing marks of the Purrah are two parallel tattooed lines round the middle of the body, inclining upwards in front, towards the breast, and meeting in the pit of the stomach. There are various gradations of rank among them, but I could never ascertain their respective offices; persons said to be men of rank amongst them have been pointed out to me with great caution, as the Timannees, generally, do not like to speak of them; but I could learn nothing further. Purrah-men sometimes quit their retirement, and associate with the townspeople, following employments of various kinds, but no chief or headman dare bring a palaver against a Purrah-man, for fear of a retributive visit from the whole body. At stated periods they hold conventions or assemblies, and on those occasions the country is in the greatest state of confusion and alarm; no proclamation is publicly made, but a notice from the chief or headman of the Purrah, communicated by signs hung up at different places, with the meaning of which they are acquainted, is a summons to them to meet on an appointed day, at a certain rendezvous. Palavers of great weight, such as disputes between







ENTRANCE TO A "PORO BUSH"

rival towns, or offences of such magnitude as to call for capital punishments, are always settled by the Purrah—the headmen of towns not having at the present day (whatever power they may have possessed formerly) the lives or their subjects or dependents in keeping. The Purrah may be therefore said to possess the general government of the country, and from the nature of their power, and the purposes to which it is applied, they will probably be found a most serious obstacle to its civilization.”<sup>1</sup>

Every subsequent writer touches upon the Poro, and gradually more information is gleaned as to its object and procedure and the manner in which it exercises its power. The fullest account is to be found in Mr. Alldridge’s “The Sherbro and its Hinterland” (1901). The Poro is for men only, and it begins by training the youth of the country. Boys between 7 and 20 are taken into the Poro bush for several months. “The meetings of the fraternity for initiation of new members always take place in the dry season, from November to April, as they are held in the Big Bush, a part of which is sufficiently cleared and the ground cleaned. The opening to the Big Bush is rudely constructed of palm leaves, the entrance being through leafy bowers, and the aperture serving for a doorway hung with country mats. Inside, the place is separated into compartments similarly divided by palm leaves—that entrance also being hung with mats. The whole is beneath the dense and overspreading foliage of high trees, and is known as the Poro bush.”<sup>2</sup> This Big Bush is usually much higher than the usual

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 92-99.

<sup>2</sup> “The Sherbro and its Hinterland,” p. 126.

low bush of the country, and looks more like virgin bush—a scarce commodity in Mende-land. Here the boys are taught and trained and initiated, here they dance and sing after dark, and here they are imbued with the idea of the power and authority of the Poro. After some months of training the boy is placed in—

(1) The Messenger or servant class ; or,

(2) The Mohammedan Mori<sup>1</sup> or the Devil men class ; or,

(3) The Chiefs' class ;

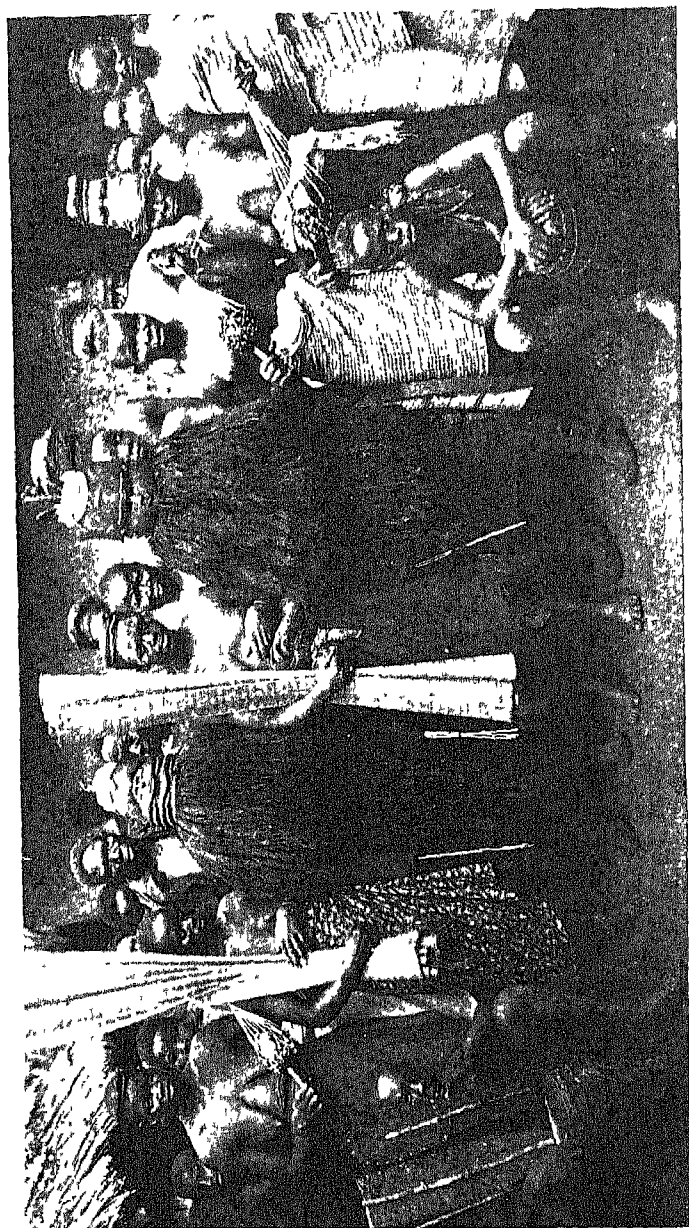
when further initiation and instruction suitable to his class are given.

Until the British Government proclaimed a Protectorate, the government of the country was practically in the hands of the third class. The chiefs would assemble in the Poro bush, they would be sworn to secrecy, and then would discuss the matter in hand ; their orders would be issued and carried out by the whole Society ; any member in default could be tried by a Poro tribunal inside the Poro bush, condemned, and there put away.

Every member of the Human Leopard Society is a member of the Poro, the main supporters of both societies are the chiefs, the place of meeting for both societies is the Poro bush—this suffices to show how easily the Poro organization can be used, and no doubt has been used, for many of the purposes of the human leopards.

<sup>1</sup> When it suits his purpose a Mori man will insist that by his religion he can have nothing to do with such a heathen custom as the Poro ; but one of the features of the Sierra Leone Hinterland is the remarkable way in which Mohammedan Mori men are associated with every form of secret society, magic, witchcraft, “medicine,” and every sort of trickery.





BUNDU DEVILS, SIERRA LEONE.

## TONGO PLAYERS

A quotation which Mr. Alldridge has been so good as to allow from his "Sherbro and its Hinterland" (pp. 156-159) with respect to the Tongo players already alluded to will illustrate the atmosphere in which the human leopards worked.

"Formerly when suspicious circumstances, such as frequent sudden deaths, or the continuous disappearance of individuals, as in the case of the victims of the Human Leopards, arose and baffled the local fetish, recourse was had to the terrible Tongo player system, especially if cannibalism was thought to be at the bottom of the mischief.

"To set this medicine going the intervention of a most appalling fetish had to be invoked through a class of medicine people from the upper country called the Tongo players.

"As soon as the Tongo players had determined to comply with a request from a chief, they sent out their emissaries into his towns and villages to obtain information concerning suspected people. When all was ready the head of the Tongo, named Buamor Neppor, attended by his two principal assistants, Akawa (Big Thing) and Bojuwa (Great Thing) with their following, arrived in the principal town and proceeded to clear a space in the bush for their encampment, where they made their fetish medicine. This place of concealment was called Mashundu.

"In the investigation one village at a time was dealt with. A messenger was despatched to call all the men, women, and children to a meeting to be held on an appointed day.

“ The meeting was held on a cleared space, called the Korbangai, outside the town, to which the people had been summoned. They were then drawn up into line. Their names were called by a spy from their own village, who was in the pay of the Tongo players. Certain questions were asked. The names of suspected persons were then submitted to the medicine-men, hidden in the bush, who professed to go through the ordeal by which the guilt or innocence of these suspected persons might be determined. The operator's ordeal was the plunging his hand into a cauldron of boiling oil and pulling out a piece of hot iron. If the hand was burned, it was certain proof of guilt ; if not burned, of innocence.

“ The victim thus being found out, he was brought before the head Tongo player, who asked him if he were prepared to pay money. If he were, time was allowed for him to send to his family ; meanwhile he was detained and stocked. Having got as much as they could out of the man and his family, an excuse was made, and he was burned to death.

“ On some occasions a Tongo play was held. The players were arrayed in barbaric costume. They wore a leopard-skin cap, the side flaps of which drooped over the face, a leopard tail hung down from the back of the cap, and a sort of door bell was attached to the end. There was a leopard-skin jacket ; the wrists, elbows, and ankles were further adorned with strips of leopard skin ; the whole costume being completed by short cloth knickers, trimmed with leopard skin, and leopard-skin gaiters.

“ The Tongo players came out and danced ; the headman and his attendant carried a knobbed staff

set with sharp cutting instruments, called the Tongora, which was loosely veiled with leopard skin.

“While dancing the headman and his two attendants suddenly rushed up to the suspected persons and dealt them heavy blows with the Tongora, blows which may or may not have killed them at once; but whether killed or not they were quickly taken away and thrown on the fire.”

#### BORFIMA

A word which was constantly heard before the Special Commission Court was Borfima, the “medicine” referred to in the Human Leopard Ordinance. The word is a contraction of *Boreh fima*, medicine bag, and is usually, but not invariably, tightly bound up in a leather package. This package contains, amongst other things, the white of an egg, the blood, fat, and other parts of a human being, the blood of a cock, and a few grains of rice; but to make it efficacious it must occasionally be anointed with human fat and smeared with human blood. So anointed and smeared, it is an all-powerful instrument in the hands of its owner, it will make him rich and powerful, it will make people hold him in honour, it will help him in cases in the White Man’s Court, and it certainly has the effect of instilling in the native mind great respect for its owner and a terrible fear lest he should use it hostilely. An oath administered by the proper person and with due ceremony upon Borfima is of the most binding nature, and it was by means of such oaths that great secrecy was obtained. But the potency of this great fetish apparently soon



evaporated. Owners of the Borfima found that their riches did not increase as rapidly as they anticipated, they lost cases in the Courts, expectations were not realized with respect to adverse witnesses upon whose hearts and livers and kidneys imprecations had been showered—all this showed that the Borfima had become weak and needed resuscitation with fresh human fat and blood—and to obtain this human fat and blood was the primary object of the Human Leopard Society.

#### WITCH-DOCTORS

To give an idea of the mental outlook of the majority of the natives before the Court, and so that some of the difficulties under which the prosecution laboured may be appreciated, allusion should be made to witch-doctors and oaths.

A witch-doctor holds a high position in a native community, and is often able to accumulate great wealth. The practice of this profession is usually confined to certain families, the secrets of the profession being handed down from father to son. Only one member of the family practises at the same time, although he may have a number of assistants who are commonly members of his family. Some of these witch-doctors profess to be able to name and trace their ancestors back to a remote period. All the followers of this profession are skilled herbalists and have some knowledge of surgery, but they profess to effect cures by the aid of witchcraft. If a native is ill, it is said that he has been caught by some devil, and it is the business of the witch-doctor to rid him





WIVES OF A NATIVE CHIEF.

of that devil. The witch-doctor knows that certain devils dislike certain herbs, which, if administered to the sick person, may have the effect of disgusting the devil and making it fly away. A devil is frequently caught and put into a bottle, and then it is for the patient to say whether he will have it destroyed, which can only be done by fire, or whether he will allow it to be released and propitiated by various offerings, and by such means transform it into a friendly devil, which he can make use of to injure some other person. The witch-doctor is frequently employed by chiefs or other much-married men to discover whether their numerous wives have been guilty of acts of infidelity; they are also frequently employed to discover the perpetrators of any crime and the place of concealment of stolen property, and it is extraordinary what successes they achieve, particularly in discovering stolen property.

#### OATHS

Another line of practice in which witch-doctors excel is the "pulling of swears"—*anghce*, the removal of oaths. When an oath is taken upon an ordinary native "medicine," it is possible for the oath-taker to be absolved from the consequences of a breach of his oath by engaging a witch-doctor, who, for a fee proportionate to the potency of the "medicine" used, will "pull the swear." This is accomplished by certain ceremonies performed with other "medicines." After the "swear has been pulled," the first medicine has, so to speak, its teeth drawn.

The "medicine" on which pagan Mende witnesses

were sworn before the Special Commission Court was compounded every Monday morning by the Court interpreter, and consisted of a preparation of salt, pepper and ashes mixed with water. A spoonful of the mixture was taken by each witness when sworn ; if there were many witnesses, fresh " medicine " had to be prepared later in the week. The oath administered in the presence of the Court and repeated by each witness was, in its English translation, as follows : " I (*name of witness*) swear by this medicine to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Should I tell a lie, if I go to the farm may snake bite me, if I travel by canoe may the canoe sink, and may my belly be swollen. I swear by my liver, my lungs, my kidneys, and my heart that, should I tell a lie, may I never be saved, but may I die suddenly."

## CHAPTER III

### THE KALE CASE

THE Special Commission Court, consisting of Sir W. B. Griffith, President, Mr. F. A. Van der Meulen, and Mr. K. J. Beatty, commenced its sittings at Gbangbama in the Northern Sherbro District on the 16th December, 1912.

Gbangbama is a town belonging to the Imperri Chiefdom, and is situate in the heart of the Mende country, having, within a radius of ten miles, several towns where murders committed in connection with the Human Leopard Society had recently taken place.

The Court was held in a large barri<sup>1</sup> specially erected for the purpose. The prisoners were confined in a number of huts surrounded by a stockade, and were guarded by a company of the West African Frontier Force. Several members of the Freetown Bar were present for the purpose of defending various persons to be tried by the Court.

The first two days were occupied chiefly with legal questions raised by counsel on the cases before the Court.

The first case dealt with was the one known as the KALE CASE, which occupied the time of the Court for nearly a fortnight, and in which the evidence of a

<sup>1</sup> I.e. a thatched roof on wooden posts with thick mud walls about two feet high.

large number of witnesses was taken. Three men<sup>1</sup> were charged with the murder in or about the month of March, 1911, of a boy named Kalfalla, aged about fourteen years. The murder took place at a village named Kale, which is situated on the bank of the Mongheri River opposite the town of Mongheri, both of which places are within the Jong Chiefdom. The accused were all headmen and men of importance in the Chiefdom, and the deceased Kalfalla was the son of one of them, and was at the time of his death in the process of being initiated into the Poro.

The three boys who were put in the Poro bush at the same time as the deceased gave evidence before the Court, and described how they had been captured by the Poro Devils and taken to a Poro bush at the town of Senehun, which was under the control of an important person who was described as the Kumrabai (King-Maker) of the Jong Chiefdom. While they were in the Senehun Poro bush, two of the accused came to the Kumrabai and asked that these boys should be allowed to go to the Kale Poro bush, so that they should be available to assist in farm work. Permission was at first refused, but eventually they were allowed to go, where, in accordance with Poro custom, they worked out of sight of all women. A shimbek (i.e. a grass hut with grass walls) was built in the Kale Poro bush for the boys, and for several nights they slept in this shimbek.

These three boys stated that one evening the three prisoners, one of whom was the father of the deceased, came into the Poro bush and told

<sup>1</sup> At the request of the Colonial Office the names of the accused persons in all the cases have been withheld.



A PORO DEVIL



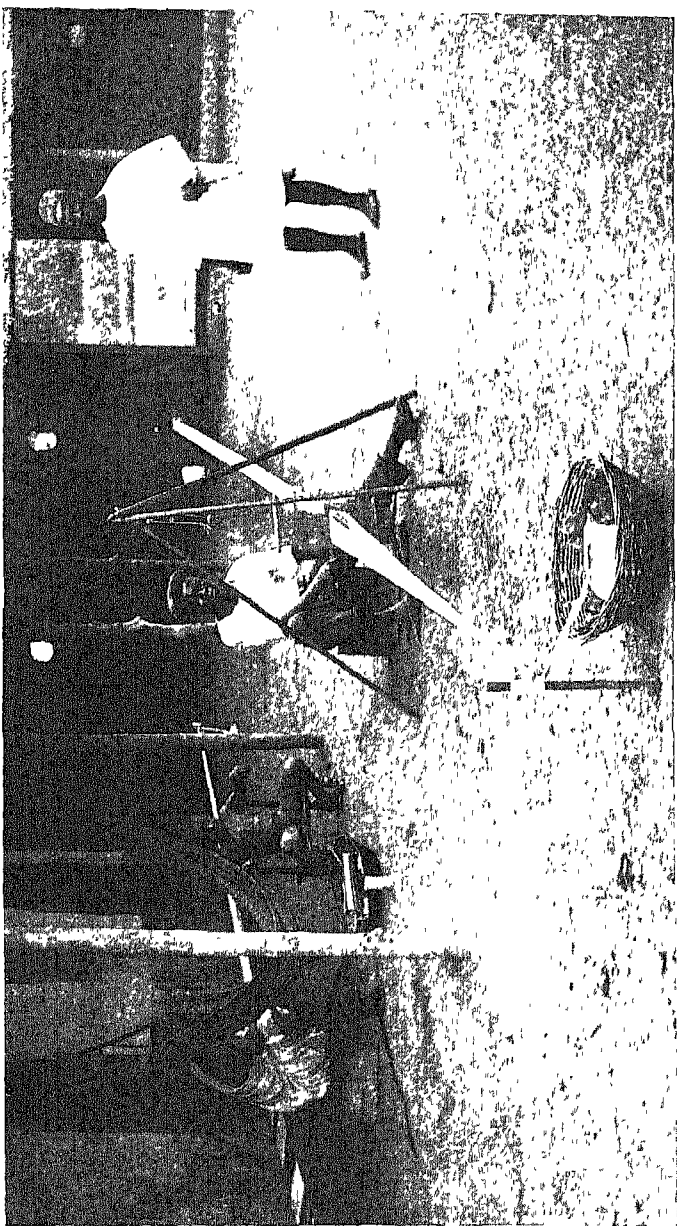


them that they were to come out of the bush that night and sleep in the barri (a shelter with low walls) at the back of a house belonging to one of the accused, the deceased's father. They described the position in which they slept, how shortly before daybreak they were awakened by a noise, and how they saw one of the prisoners holding the deceased boy by the legs, whilst another of them, who had a leopard skin over the top of his head and hanging down his back, was bending over the body. The boys raised an alarm, and as the accused ran away they heard sounds which resembled the pit-a-pat of hurrying feet, and the impression created was that it was a large number of persons who were running away from the barri. Soon after this the father of the murdered boy again appeared on the scene ; he went immediately to the barri and appeared to show grief on seeing that his son was dead. His accomplices next appeared, followed shortly afterwards by a number of other men, who assisted in carrying the body to the Poro bush. Arrived there the accused, together with some other members of the Society, consulted together or, as the witnesses described it, "hung head." It was agreed to bury the body at once, and the boys were threatened that if they spoke about the matter something bad would happen to them ; that if they were ever asked what had happened to the dead boy they were to say that a snake had bitten him. The eldest boy was also sworn on the Borfima not to reveal what he had seen and heard. This boy described the oath he took, which was to the effect that if he revealed this matter and afterwards went by water he would drown ; if he went into the bush

a snake would bite him; and if he walked on a road thunder would strike him. He was further sworn on his heart and on his kidneys that both would wither away if he broke his oath.

The boys and several witnesses described the wounds on the deceased, three of which were in the throat, and the other on the chest. From the description given of the wounds there could be no doubt but that they were caused by some sharp instrument, probably a knife, and could not have been caused by a leopard's claws. The accused, in accordance with native custom, were compelled to report the matter to the "Grand Master" of the Poro, but contrary to native custom they did not report until after the body was buried. At this breach of custom the Kumrabai was annoyed, but he allowed himself to be pacified with a "head of money"—seven country cloths, valued at about thirty shillings.

Two witnesses who confessed to being members of the Human Leopard Society were called and gave an interesting description of their initiation into the Society. They had joined the Society at different times, and belonged to different branches of it. One belonged to the branch in the Imperri Chiefdom, and the other to a branch in the Gallinas Chiefdom, several days' march distant, but their description tallied in almost every detail regarding the initiation ceremony and the objects of the sacrifice. A mark is made on a candidate for initiation, usually on the buttocks, so that it will be concealed by the loin cloth, the usual and only article of dress worn by the ordinary native in those parts. The mark is



WEAVING COUNTRY CLOTH



made by piercing the flesh with an iron needle, raising it, and shaving off a thin slice of flesh. The wound is then treated with a medicine known as Nikori, which apparently has antiseptic qualities, and which is made by grinding the bark of the wild ground nut. The blood taken from the wound is put on the "Borfima," and the novice by this means becomes what is spoken of as "joined or married to the medicine," and a full member of the Society. Meetings are only held when the leaders of the Society consider that the Borfima belonging to their particular branch requires what is spoken of as "feeding" or "blooding," and this can only be done by the killing of some person. Apparently one of the rules of the Society is that a victim must be provided by a member of the Society; usually, the person called upon to provide the victim is a member who has received some material advancement, such as becoming a Mahawa (a paramount chief) or a Mahawuru (sub-chief), as it is considered necessary on such occasions to propitiate the Borfima, which is looked upon as all-powerful for good or evil. When it is arranged who is to provide the victim, a date is fixed, usually four to six days later, a rendezvous is decided upon, and the persons who are to do the killing are selected. The second meeting is generally fixed for just after dusk, usually in the Poro bush, and the victim is either enticed to a place in the vicinity of the meeting-place, or certain members are appointed to do the killing in the town or village, and convey the body to the Poro bush, where the Borfima is first "blooded" and then the body is divided up among the members, and, according to

the evidence of the ex-members of the Society, the flesh is either eaten raw on the spot or taken away and cooked. To use the words of one of these witnesses, "some like it raw, some roast, and some prefer it boiled with rice." The witnesses also described how the members of the Society made themselves known to each other by a movement of the second finger across the palm of another person in shaking hands, and also by a peculiar rolling of the eyes. Both signs were demonstrated to the Court. The witnesses examined certain marks in the buttocks of the three prisoners, and alleged that they were the marks made at initiation into membership of the Human Leopard Society.

The following, somewhat interesting, point of native custom was touched on in the evidence: When a boy who is in the Poro bush dies, the body is buried there, and his death is not announced to the female relatives until after the Poro has "been pulled" (finished). It is the duty of the Lakai (the head-messenger of the Chiefdom and a high officer in the Poro) and of him only to announce the death. When the Poro is about to be "pulled," all the women who have sons in the Poro bush are made to stand in a circle at the entrance to the town. The Lakai is escorted by his retainers into the midst of them. He carries an earthen pot, and if a death has occurred among the Poro boys he dashes the pot to the ground and breaks it at the feet of the mother of the boy, and in this way announces to her the death of her son. The women wail for some hours, after which a funeral dance is given by the parents or the nearest relatives of the deceased;

and this dance may be kept up for several days and nights, according to the wealth of the family of the deceased, who provide the food and drink for the occasion.

None of these ceremonies were performed in connection with the death of the boy Kalfalla ; but the omission of these rites was not a matter to which much weight could be attached, owing to the difficulty of obtaining reliable information on matters connected with the Poro, and the custom is only mentioned incidentally.

The defence of the accused was that a bush leopard had killed the boy. They admitted that they had concealed this fact and had given out that it was a snake-bite which had caused the death of the deceased, but they said that their reason for doing so was in order to save the father of the deceased, the first accused in the case, from certain penalties which he would have incurred had it come to the ears of the Poro Headman that he had allowed a "bush-boy" who was still in the Poro to sleep in an open place outside the Poro bush. The position, shape, and character of the wounds were emphasized to show that it must have been a bush leopard which had caused them, and it was pointed out that it was an offence against the law of the country for any one to sleep in an open place exposed to danger, such as the barri where the boys had been permitted to sleep. The accused alleged that these "bush-boys" should not have been allowed to sleep out of the Poro bush, and that it was an aggravation of the offence that they had been allowed to sleep in an open place like a barri, that the first accused, as



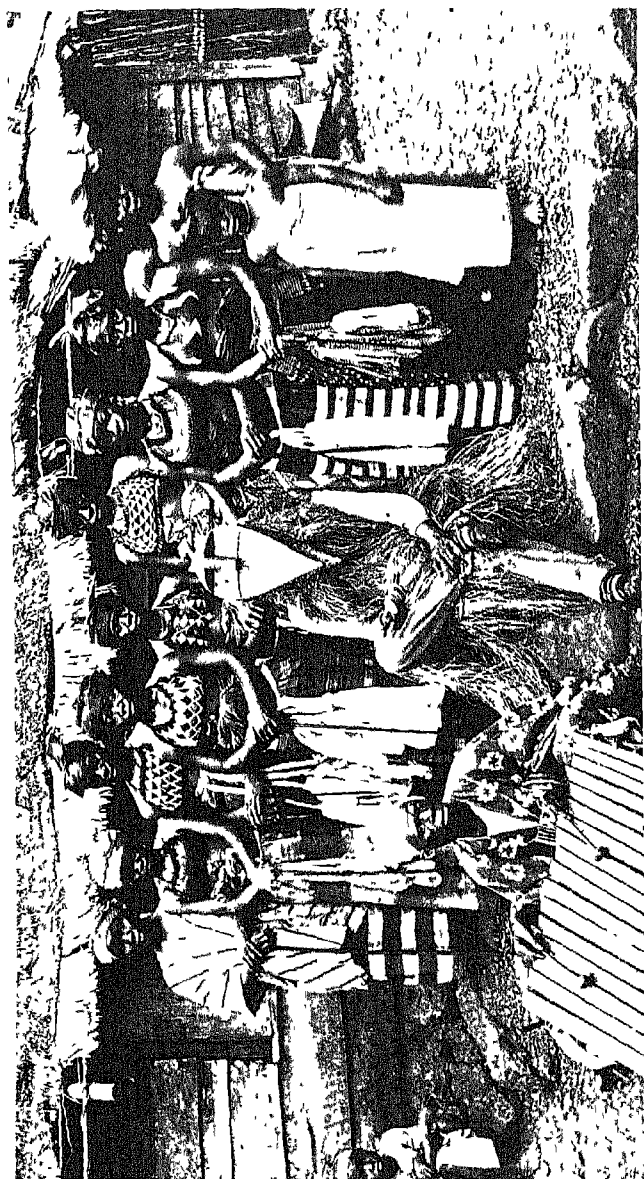
head of the family, was the person on whom the blame would have fallen; and that he, for these reasons, persuaded the others to give out that it was a snake-bite which had caused death. If this was accepted, they urged, they would not be called on to show the spot where the boy was injured, and they added that the burial was hurried so that people should know as little about it as possible. Had the burial been delayed, the women might have got to know, and that would have been a further offence against Poro law. It was also submitted that it was contrary to nature that the first accused would have murdered his own son in such a cold-blooded manner.

The prisoners were ably defended, but the arguments put forward for the defence did not create doubt as to the main facts deposed to by the witnesses for the Crown.

From the evidence of the witnesses one thing emerged conclusively—viz. that it was no bush leopard which killed the boy, but that it was some person or persons simulating a leopard who murdered him; and the evidence of the other boys that they had heard the pattering of many feet outside the barri when they raised the alarm pointed to the fact that there were a number of persons concerned in the murder.

The Court could come to no other conclusion than that the murder was committed in connection with the Human Leopard Society, and that the first and second accused were the actual murderers of the boy Kalfalla. These two men were found guilty of murder and sentenced to death, and were publicly executed at Mattru in the presence of the acting





BUNDU GIRLS AND DEVIL

paramount chief and a large number of his people on the 25th January, 1913.

The third accused, who had taken a prominent part in concealing the murder, and who was proved to be leading member of the Human Leopard Society, was found guilty of being an accessory after the fact to murder, and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE IMPERRI CASE

THE second case dealt with was the one known as the Imperri case. Fifty-four persons were charged with the murder of a boy aged about twenty years. They were also charged with being accessories after the fact to murder and further with being members of an unlawful society: to wit, the Human Leopard Society.

The murder took place on 13th July, 1912.

The Crown Prosecutor, for want of evidence to corroborate the story told by accomplices who had turned King's evidence, only proceeded against fifteen of these persons on the capital charge.

The case was commenced on the 13th January and the verdict was given on the 3rd March. Fifty-nine witnesses gave evidence, and the notes of evidence taken reached nearly a thousand foolscap pages.

The facts as alleged by the witnesses for the Crown were as follows:

Very early on the morning of Sunday the 8th July, 1912, the leaders of the Human Leopard Society met at some place near the town of Victoria, the chief commercial town in the Imperri Chiefdom, and decided to hold a general meeting of the Society that same evening in the Imperri Poro bush. The Santiggies (messengers) of the Society were despatched

to warn members to attend, and about sixty of them met that same evening.

They began to arrive at the rendezvous, which was a clearing in the centre of the Poro bush, soon after dark. There was only one path leading into this clearing, which was surrounded with dense bush, and on this path were stationed certain executive members of the Society, who passed the members along after they were satisfied as to their membership. They proved this chiefly by the peculiar handshake of the Society.

No lights were allowed at this meeting. Towards midnight the President of the Society, who owed his position to his being the most important man in the Chiefdom, arrived with his staff, and after the names and rank of the persons present were called, he proceeded to address the meeting. He announced that the object of calling members together was to discuss and consider the question of providing food, or in other words "blood" and fat, for their medicine. That it was some time since the parent Borfima was fed, and that it was necessary that their own Borfimas should also be blooded and anointed.

A discussion then arose as to the means of providing the necessary victim. One of the members present was asked to supply a victim, and when he demurred it was pointed out to him that it was his turn to do so by the rules of the Society, and it was suggested that the person to be supplied should be his adopted son Yagba. Both this member and the uncle of the boy Yagba protested strongly, a heated discussion followed, and finally the two members in question were informed that unless they im-

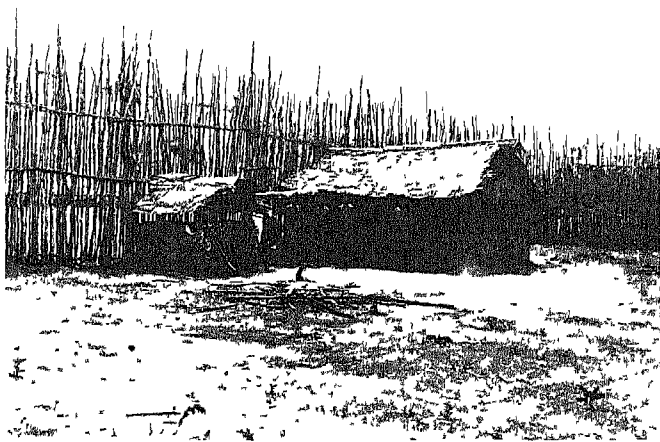
mediately consented to give the boy asked for, either one or both of them would take his place. Under fear of this threat they consented.

It was then arranged that the members should meet again on the Friday following, and both the father and uncle of the promised victim were warned that if the boy disappeared or there was any difficulty about obtaining him one of them would be taken instead. After nominating two of the members to do the killing and others to convey the body to the Poro bush the meeting was adjourned.

On the following Thursday a boy died in the town of Imperri and his body was buried next day. In the ordinary course of events there would have been a funeral dance that evening, but fearing that it might interfere with their projects, some of the members of the Human Leopard Society secured its postponement.

As it grew dark that evening, the members of the Society gathered together in the Poro bush. The members deputed to do the killing were dressed in their regalia of leopard skin.

As the evening wore on and the time for sleep came, the boy Yagba, under instructions from his uncle, spread his mat on the verandah of the latter's house and lay down and eventually went to sleep. About midnight the two murderers arrived and crept on all fours up to where Yagba was lying. One of them held him while the other stabbed him in the neck with a knife. Death was not instantaneous, and the boy moaned and beat the ground with his feet. This awakened some women and a youth who were in the house, and their screams aroused the whole town.



STOCKADE SURROUNDING GBANGBAMA PRISON AND GUARD HOUSE



PRISONERS AWAITING TRIAL, GBANGBAMA PRISON.





An attempt was made by the two murderers to drag the body away, but as a number of people rushed out of their houses they gave up their attempt and fled into the bush where they warned the others of what had happened and got rid of their leopard-skin dress. The members belonging to the town hastened to get back to their houses before their absence should be discovered. •

The townspeople collected round the body of the murdered boy and kept saying to each other, "What is this trouble?" "What has happened?" The uncle of the boy, who had been beside him the whole time and who appeared to be very upset at seeing the body, said in reply to the questions on all sides that koribrah (leopard people) had killed him. He was taken aside by some of the accused, and the seriousness of his admission pointed out to him. He was told to say that owing to distress of mind he did not know what he was saying, that what he really meant to say was that it was a bush leopard that had killed the boy, and that he himself had seen two leopards rushing out of the town after the alarm had been raised. He was promised a sum of money if the matter was hushed up on the basis of the death being attributed to a bush leopard, but it was incidentally mentioned to him that if he did not succeed in creating this belief the town would in all probability lose another of its citizens, as their Borfima had not yet been fed, and they would, in a certain event, know where to look for a victim. The story was then circulated that it was a bush leopard that had killed the boy; and there was some confirmation of this story by the statements of some women

and boys who said they saw what looked like a leopard running away after the alarm had been given. From the evidence it appeared that these people had mistaken the murderers in their dresses of leopard skins for real leopards, which are numerous in the vicinity.

About 6.30 the following morning the clerk to the District Commissioner overheard a man at the town of Gbangbama tell a friend that a bush leopard had killed some one at the town of Imperri the night before. The clerk immediately proceeded with some police or, as they are called in the Protectorate, Court Messengers to the town of Imperri, and arrived there soon after 8 a.m. They were met by the chief men of the town and taken to view the body of the boy Yagba, several of the accused being present and volunteering the information that a bush leopard had killed the deceased. The Court Messengers, as a preliminary step, took into custody all the people who occupied the house where the deceased had been killed, including the uncle of the boy. Meanwhile a vigorous search was prosecuted to find the spoor of a leopard, but none was to be found in or about the town. His uncle was then taken on one side by the clerk and Court Messengers and in view of the nature of the wounds and the fact that there were no signs of any leopard was asked to explain how the boy had come by his death.

It was clear, owing to the nature of the wounds, that no leopard had killed the boy; and, faced with this fact and his admission of the night before, he gave an account of the murder and the names of the persons concerned in it. As many of these persons

as could then be found were forthwith taken into custody, the others were subsequently arrested, and after a preliminary examination before the District Commissioner all were committed for trial.

The chief testimony against the accused was that of two accomplices who had turned informers. These men confessed to being members of the Human Leopard Society and as having been present at the murders of several victims of the Society. They gave evidence to the effect that all the accused bore the mark of the Leopard Society. The mark on each of the accused was pointed out during the hearing of the case, but although there were certain peculiarities about the mark, and although its position on the person of each of the accused was in most instances approximately the same, yet, owing to the fact that the majority of them had other marks, similar in shape and colour, some doubt existed as to whether the marks pointed out were really the marks received on initiation into the Society.

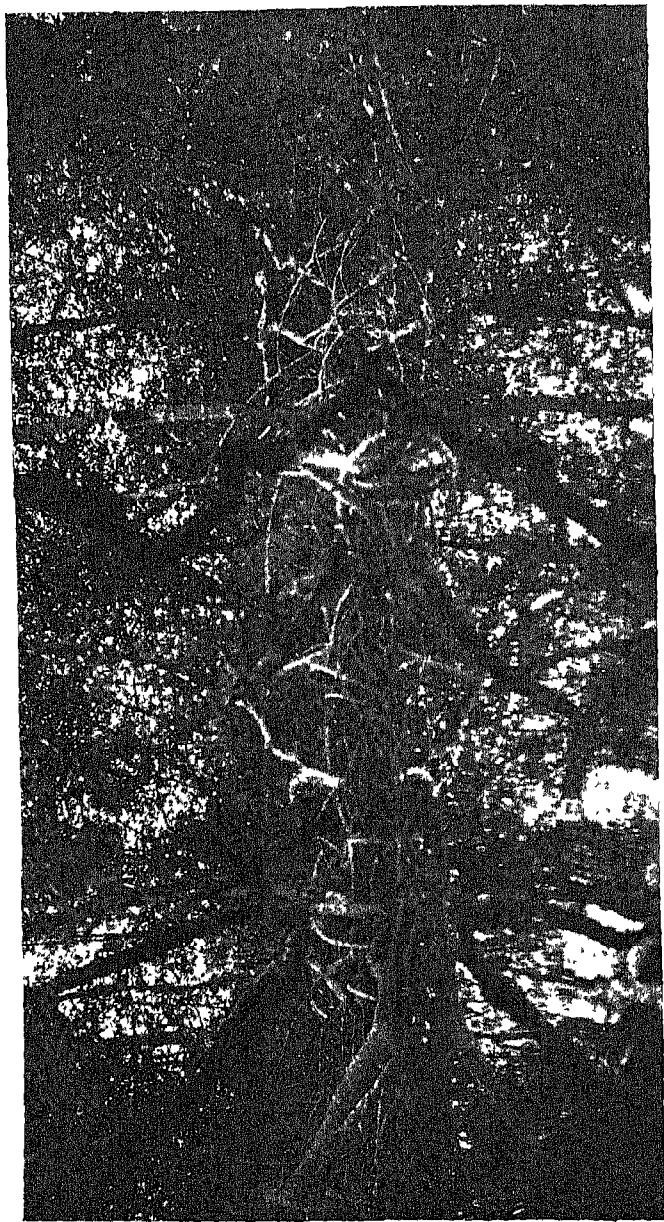
After hearing the evidence, no one could doubt that a murder had been committed, and that that murder had been committed by members of the Human Leopard Society. Their plans miscarried, they were disturbed at their work by the cries of the occupants of the house ; the actual murderers finished their work, but those deputed to carry away the body failed, the uninitiated in the village awakened, and saw what had happened, and it was too late to remove the body. The question then followed as to whether the persons charged were those who had actually committed or who had taken part in the murder. The evidence of the accomplices was

strong, but the chief difficulty in regard to the case for the Crown was to obtain corroboration of the evidence of these accomplices. In cases of this sort where the principal men are bound together by the bonds of guilt as well as of secrecy, where the victim is provided by the head of the family, who, instead of ferreting out the crime, uses all his influence to have the matter hushed up, and where the whole people cower down in dread of the terrible vengeance threatened by the awe-inspiring Borfima, it is not to be wondered at that it is exceptional to be able to procure independent evidence. The relatives, even the mother of the victim, will not come forward willingly, and when such witnesses are forced to give evidence they will only say what they think is non-committal, and from that they will not budge. They look upon the "medicine" as being responsible, and hold the view that the members of the Society are forced into killing a victim in order to "feed" the Borfima.

In this case, however, many of the non-committal statements pieced together formed important corroborative evidence, and that, together with other evidence, satisfied the Court as to the guilt of six of the accused, who were found guilty of murder.

The sentence on four of them was publicly carried out at the town of Imperri on 18th April, 1913. The fifth and sixth, who were domestic slaves, were also found guilty of murder and sentenced to death, but the sentences, on the recommendation of the Court, were afterwards commuted by the Governor-in-Council to life imprisonment. The Lavari to the principal accused was found guilty of being an acces-





A NATURAL BRIDGE ON THE ROAD TO GRANGBAMA

sory after the fact to the murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

There is little doubt that but for the chance overhearing by the District Commissioner's clerk that a boy had been killed by a leopard this crime would never have been brought to light. After a time, when all trace of evidence had vanished, it would have been given out that the boy had been killed by a bush leopard. And this story would have been all the more difficult to disprove from the fact that in that neighbourhood leopards abound. Within a few hundred yards of where the Court sat was a leopard trap, whilst during the hearing of this particular case at least two leopards were shot within a mile of the Court barri.



## CHAPTER V

### THE KABATI CASE

THE next case dealt with was the one known as the Kabati Case, from the village where the murder took place. In this and the following cases Lieut.-Colonel H. G. Warren sat in place of Mr. Van der Meulen, who proceeded on leave.

Originally fifty-six persons had been charged and committed for trial on a charge of murder.

The person murdered was a young woman named Mini, and the murder took place in or about the month of May, 1911, at Kabati, a small village in the Northern Sherbro District of the Protectorate.

As in the previous case, sufficient corroborative evidence to support the stories told by accomplices, who were the chief witnesses for prosecution, could not be obtained, and the Crown Prosecutor decided to proceed against only three of the prisoners, entering a *nolle prosequi* on the capital charge against the remainder. These latter were subsequently prosecuted, and a number of them were found guilty of being members of an unlawful society.

Of the three men proceeded against two were men of importance in the Protectorate; the first accused was a paramount chief or Mahawa, and the second was a sub-chief or Mahawuru, the third accused being a brother of the Mahawuru. The girl Mini was

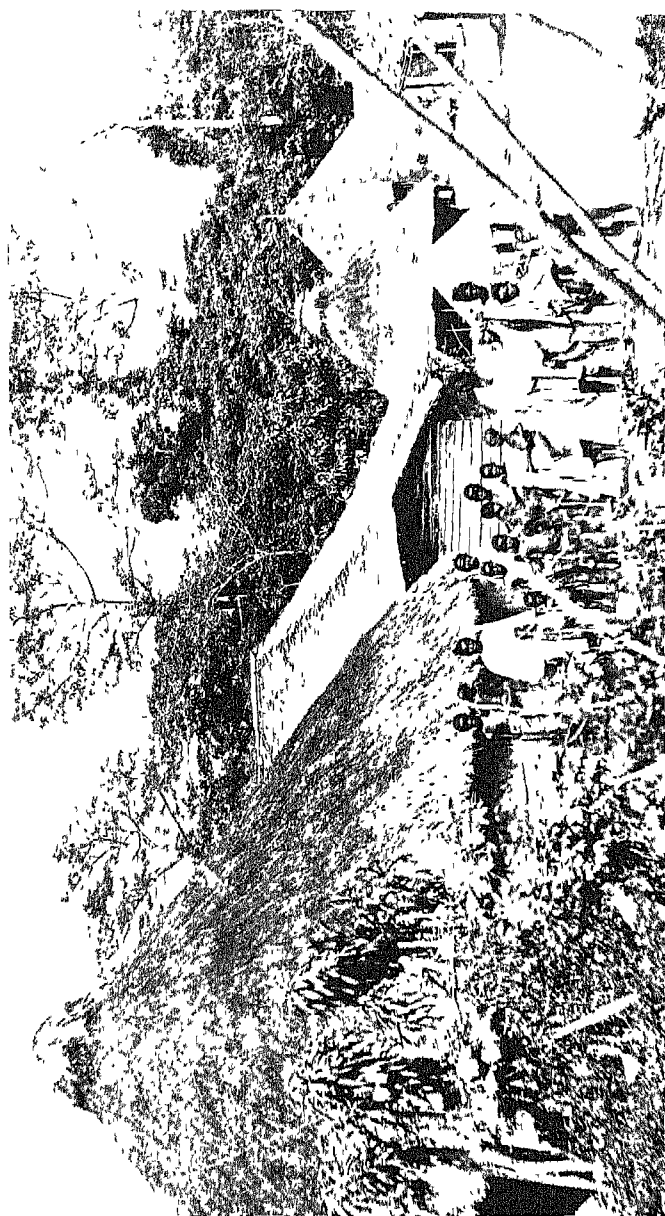
weak in intellect, but to what extent it was not easy on the evidence to say. She was the niece of the second accused, the Mahawuru, and for some time prior to the murder had formed a member of his household. The story told by the witnesses for the Crown was as follows :

Some time toward the end of May, 1911, a meeting of the members of the Human Leopard Society was convened and held one evening at Mosenge, a deserted village on the borders of the Imperri and the Jong Chiefdoms, and was attended by most of the members belonging to that particular branch of the Society. Soon after dark the members began to arrive, and after giving the countersign were admitted to the meeting. A small fire was lighted, round which the members sat. Three Mahawas or paramount chiefs were present, and they with other big men of the Society sat in front with their subjects, in order of precedence, immediately behind them. When all those summoned were assembled, the second accused—the girl Mini's uncle—was elected Mahein (presiding officer) of the meeting. He first called the names of all the principal men, who answered to their names. The senior member then, in accordance with the custom, said to the second accused, "You"—mentioning his name—"have called a meeting of the members of this Society, which should not meet except when important business is to be done; we therefore look to you now to tell us what that important business is." The second accused, after walking three times round the circle, proceeded to address the meeting. He said, "The spirits have spoken to me and told me that unless we want something bad to happen to us

we should put blood on our Borfimas when four days and four nights have passed. I invite you all to meet again, and at that meeting I myself will supply a person whose blood will satisfy the hunger of the Borfima."

In answer to inquiry the second accused further informed those present that the person he proposed to give would be his niece Mini, whom he stated had a devil in her. Then after some discussion as to how the murder was to be carried out and after details had been arranged the meeting broke up.

On the evening of the fourth day after this the members of the Society reassembled at Mosenge, and about sixty persons were present. When all the expected guests had arrived, the second accused, who was still Mahein, called over as before the names of those present. It was arranged that they should remain at Mosenge until it was sufficiently late for ordinary villagers to have retired for the night. Towards midnight a move was made in the direction of Kabati, which was about three miles distant, and on their arrival at the outskirts of the village they were led to some bush, where they were told to sit down. The second accused, who was the Mahawuru of Kabati, and his brother then went into the village, and were quickly followed by members wearing the regalia in the form of the leopard skin of the Society. The woman Mini had for some days previous to this been sleeping alone in a room at the back of her uncle's house, at some distance from where his wives and the other members of his household slept, and one of his domestic slaves, who for the purpose of performing menial acts had been made a member of



A NATIVE VILLAGE



the Society, was placed on guard over her. On this man signalling that all was well the second accused went into the room and quickly awakened the girl, who followed him down the bush path to where the other members were waiting. She came quite quietly, and did not appear to realize that anything unusual was occurring. It was stated by persons present that a firi (a horse tail elaborately decorated with sebbehs) and an Aku (Yoruba) cap to which more sebbehs (charms) were attached were then produced by two important members of the Society, and that a certain ceremony was gone through which included the pointing of these things at the girl. It was then announced that members present need not feel any alarm in regard to what was going to happen, as the ceremony performed would have the effect of warding off suspicion and would assist them in concealing what was going to happen that night.

It was alleged that the third accused then went behind the girl and stabbed her in the side with a large knife. She fell forward, and was immediately seized by four men and hurriedly carried farther along the path to a small clearing. The other members of the Society fell in behind. The body was deposited near where the Society's "medicine," the Borfima, had been placed, and veins of the victim's throat were opened so that the blood might flow over the "medicine."

After the parent Borfima had been blooded, a few persons who were sufficiently important to be able to keep their own Borfimas advanced in order of seniority and collected a few drops of blood on their

"medicine" which they had brought with them for that purpose.

Two men were then nominated to cut up the body. The belly was first cut open and flapped over the chest and the interior organs were removed. The breasts were then cut away and given to one of the Mahawas (chiefs), and part of the belly, the finger and toe-nails and the scalp containing the hair were given to the first accused. The heart was set aside to be sent to an important and educated member, who was represented at the feast, but who did not wish to be present himself. The more important persons present named in turn the particular piece of flesh they wanted, and the remainder of the body was divided among those of lesser importance. A fire was lighted, over which a certain quantity of flesh was cooked, but a number of the members appeared to have vied with each other in seeing what quantity of raw flesh they could eat. The bones, after being picked clean, were left lying near the spot, and the "empty skull" was thrown down an incline towards a stream some twenty or thirty yards away.

On the 30th May, as near as could be calculated by the phases of the moon as described by the witnesses, the Lavari of the second accused approached him and mentioned that he had a matter to discuss with him in the presence of the other big men of the town. A meeting was immediately called, and those summoned assembled under a cocoa-nut tree near the compound of the second accused, who, as has been already stated, was Mahawuru or sub-chief of Kabati village. The Lavari, who was an old man and of some importance in the village, said that he had summoned

those present, as it had been brought to his notice that the girl Mini was missing; that apparently no effort had been made to find her; that trouble had been caused in the past by persons disappearing; and that as they did not wish to be viewed with suspicion by the Government Authorities they should make every effort to trace the missing girl. The second accused said that it was true that his niece was missing, but that he did not know that there was any occasion for alarm, as the girl was crazy, and that she had disappeared before and had been found without much difficulty; that she had probably gone to her parents at the town of Yandehun; that he was quite able to look after his own affairs, and that if he had wanted the help of the people of the town he would have asked for it; that he looked upon it as officiousness on the part of his Lavari to have interfered in a matter connected with his household; and he added that there was nothing they need do but "beg him" (apologize to him) for making a lot of unnecessary trouble. That evening he left the town and was absent for some days. On his return he summoned the people together to the village court barri and said that some one, whose name he had not yet been able to ascertain, had been to the village of Makelpe and had spread a report that he had sacrificed his niece, and he angrily asked who had done this. Of course every one denied having said anything, and some discussion arose between the people and himself as to why he had not told them at the time of the disappearance of his niece. One of those present expostulated with him for his callous conduct in not having caused a general search



to have been made immediately after it was noticed that the girl was missing. To this he replied that he had told certain persons; but these persons, on being referred to, stated that it was not till after they had commented on the girl's disappearance that he had mentioned anything about her being missing.

At this meeting it was decided that all the young men of the town should search the fakais (farm villages) round about, and search-parties were then and there formed. It should be mentioned in connection with this meeting that a rumour had reached the town that the disappearance of the girl had been reported to the Government, and this probably accounts for the strong action taken by the people in expressing dissatisfaction with their Mahawuru.

Towards the evening of the same day, whilst the people were searching, the sound of "bugles" was heard, and two paramount chiefs arrived from opposite directions with their followers simultaneously in the town. One of these was the Mahawa or paramount chief of Imperri; the other was the Mahawa or paramount chief of Jong, and was the first accused. It was about this time that the third accused disappeared from the town. The two Mahawas (to give them their native titles) announced that they had been sent by the District Commissioner to investigate the circumstances connected with the disappearance of the missing girl, and they said that they had been instructed to see that a proper search was made. Before the Special Commission Court witnesses swore that both these Mahawas were actually present at the murder, but the people of the town of Kabati at





PALM FOREST, SIERRA LEONE

that time seem to have had no suspicion that either of them was in any way connected with the disappearance of the girl, or that they were members of the notorious Human Leopard Society. The Mahawas then ordered the arrest of all the big men of the town, who, including the second accused, were detained in a barri whilst the remainder of the townspeople were instructed to continue searching; but no trace of deceased was found that day.

The next day search was continued and some bones were found. The Mahawas went to see these bones, which were less than half a mile from the town, and every one appears to have agreed that they were the bones of the missing girl.

Some of the people appeared to have had information that the Assistant District Commissioner was on his way from the town of Victoria, which was then his headquarters, to visit the town of Kabati, and he arrived there soon after the discovery of the bones. He was taken to where the bones were along a path that had been newly cut through the bush, but he noticed what looked like an old path leading from the place where the bones were found, and that the bush round the spot appeared to have been cleared at some recent date; this, however, was explained by pointing to a farm on the other side of the stream, and by saying the people had probably come there to cut sticks to build a farm-house. He noticed a black patch about a yard in diameter, and remarked that there had been a fire there, but one of the Mahawas (the first accused in the case) remarked that that was where the body had rotted.

The Assistant District Commissioner stated in his

evidence that on one side of the black patch were some bones which looked like leg bones, and piled on them were other small bones, and he said that from their position they must have been so placed by human agency. They were just as if people had been gathering sticks. There were other bones scattered about within a radius of fifteen yards; the bones were dry, and he found no marks upon them; he thought that the thigh bones were attached to the pelvis, and the greater portion of the spinal column was intact. He made a careful search for clothing and beads, but there was no trace of any. He said that on the way to the bones the first accused told him that the girl was crazy and had gone into the bush and died.

After seeing the bones and ordering them to be collected, the Assistant District Commissioner asked for the skull, and was told that it was at the foot of the hill near a stream just below the bones. He went there with the first accused and others, and found the skull at the edge of the stream in a spot so exposed that it was visible for about twenty yards inside the farm across the stream. The skull was absolutely clean, bleached, and "perfectly dry." At the top of one jaw, level with the ear, the bone was broken. There was no doubt in the minds of any of the witnesses that these were the bones of the girl Mini. No further trace of her was hinted at and no cross-examination was directed to that point.

The Assistant District Commissioner then released all the villagers who had been arrested except the second accused, the uncle of the deceased. He also held an inquiry into the circumstances of the girl's disappearance, and, as the result, took the second

accused in custody to Victoria. Being unable, however, to obtain any evidence to connect him with the death of the girl Mini, the Assistant District Commissioner placed the matter in the hands of the Mahawa of Jong, the first accused, who found that his Mahawuru, the second accused, had failed to report the disappearance of his niece, and fined him fifty pounds and deposed him from his office of Mahawuru. There, for the time, the matter ended.

In July, 1912, the Imperri murder already dealt with took place. The murderers were disturbed at their work, and one of their number on whom suspicion was cast when called upon for explanation admitted that it was a leopard murder, and mentioned the names of several persons who were implicated. He was brought to Gbangbama on the 15th July, 1912, having previously confessed to being a member of the Human Leopard Society and as having been present at the meetings where the murder was arranged. A number of names were mentioned by him in connection with this murder, and amongst them was that of the second accused. Facts with respect to previous murders were then elicited ; but although he mentioned a great many names he did not mention those of the two Mahawas or paramount chiefs as having been present at any of those murders.

This mentioning of names continued up to the 25th July when his various statements were reduced to writing. This writing was witnessed by the two Mahawas concerned, who, up till that time, had retained the confidence of the Government Officers. On Monday the 29th July the District Commissioner

had an interview with the informer for the first time without the presence of the Mahawas, and something was said which induced the District Commissioner to order forthwith the arrest of one of them, the first accused. At once Court Messengers were sent to search his quarters in Gbangbama town. They found in a box in his house a chewing-stick of a peculiar kind, a cap with sebbehs (charms), and an envelope containing human hair, and in a gown hanging close to his bed they found a small packet containing nine parings of human nails. His house at Mattru was also searched, and there was found a firi (i.e. a horse tail with cloth wrapped round the handle) and another packet containing eighteen parings of human finger and toe-nails. All these articles he admitted were his property, with the exception of the sebbeh cap.

In this case, too, evidence was given as to the alleged leopard marks upon the three accused. But this evidence as to marks broke down. In the first place, the witnesses were not in agreement as to the alleged leopard marks upon the accused; secondly, the medical evidence was not convincing; thirdly, some other prisoners were produced by the defence with a number of marks which to the ordinary eye more or less corresponded with the so-called leopard mark, one of these men being literally covered with small-pox marks, some of which were not unlike the so-called leopard mark; fourthly, a mark produced by the Government Medical Officer, in accordance with the directions of one of the expert witnesses, was quite unlike the so-called leopard mark; and finally a number of girls and boys, whose ages ranged

from seven to sixteen years, were produced by the defence with marks,<sup>1</sup> as far as the ordinary person could judge, exactly corresponding with the so-called leopard mark.

There is little doubt that members of the Human Leopard Society are marked on entering into the Society, but such marks are so like the marks left by wounds caused by accident or disease that it is not possible for any ordinary person to distinguish, with any certainty, the difference between them.

The defence of the first accused, the Mahawa of Jong, was that the story of the informer, so far as he was concerned, was absolutely devoid of truth, and that at the time of the alleged murder he was suffering from the effects of boils under his arm so that he was unable to move about; he gave evidence per-  
porting to show that the possession of the firi, the chewing-stick, the nails and hair was perfectly lawful, and stated that the sebbeh cap was neither his property nor was it found in any of his boxes; whilst he produced official testimony with a view to showing that he was earnestly striving to eradicate cannibal murder from his chiefdom.

Furthermore he alleged that the chief witness had a special ill feeling towards him because of a land dispute between the Kabati and Imperri people, and that he had only mentioned his name in connection with this matter after compulsion on the part of the District Commissioner. He further stated that some time after his election as Mahawa certain villages, including Kabati, which had been a part of Imperri

<sup>1</sup> Not artificial marks, but scars, the result of ulcers induced by larva of the tumbo fly or of bruises obtained when working in the bush.



Chieftdom, were transferred to his Chieftdom. He stated that it was well known that cannibal murder was rife in these villages, but that it was unknown in the other parts of his chieftdom. He pointed out that to put a stop to cannibalism he had made certain rules with regard to strangers reporting their presence in villages, as to people not sleeping outside a house, as to proper doors for houses and such like. He had also assisted the Government in the Mochach murder about September, 1910, and in the Sawura murder in 1911, and had done what he could at the request of the District Commissioner to elucidate the facts in this very case. He drew attention to the fact that the second accused had been handed over to him to be dealt with in accordance with country law, and that he was sent for by the Government Authorities to assist in the Imperri case, when he did all he could to elicit information from the very informer who was now giving evidence against him.

The fir, he stated, was an heirloom and appurtenant to his office, and witnesses for the prosecution admitted that big Mahawas do possess firs, which are used as the credentials of important messengers. He explained that the chewing-stick was a present from a Muhammedan to whom he had rendered some service, and that the Arabic text found in the wrapper was nothing more than an invocation that none but seasonable words might drop from the lips of him who used it.

As to the hair found in his house, it seemed clear that many persons, even educated persons in Free-town, have a superstition about their hair being left about, and take precautions to have it disposed of in



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such a way that nobody can get possession of it. Strong "medicines" are supposed to be made with human hair, and with this "medicine" injury can be inflicted on the person from whom the hair was obtained. He said that soon after he arrived at Gbangbama he had his hair cut and that he kept it pending his return to Mattru, where he intended to have it destroyed. Finger and toe-nails also appear to be capable of malevolent use, and should not be left lying about; he said that he had cut his finger-nails just before he left Mattru, and had put the parings carefully in his gown, intending to get rid of them later, but forgot about them, and that was how they came to be in the pocket of his gown when his quarters were searched. As to those found at Mattru, he stated that the wife who assisted him when cutting them must have put them away in the small box in which they were found, that that box used to stand upon his table, and that his wife must have forgotten them, but that they were quite safe, as the box was the one in which he used to keep his pocket cash and was usually locked.

The sebbeh cap he denied the ownership of. He stated that it belonged to an Aku or Yoruba medicine man who came to Gbangbama about the same time as himself, that this man placed the box containing the cap in his house, and that the cap was not found with his things, but in another box altogether. This statement was to some extent supported by the fact that the sebbehs when opened did not, as was expected, contain Arabic texts, but only black powder and tree bark, and he called as his witness the Yoruba man to whom he alleged the cap belonged.

The defence of the second accused, the girl's uncle, was that Mini was of weak intellect, and that during a period of insanity she had wandered into the bush, and, not being able to find her way out, had died there. He stated that she first became insane after the birth of her second child, and that she became so violent that she had to be put in the stocks. He said that he obtained and had given her some sacred water and a charm which cured her for a time, that she subsequently lost the charm and became insane again, and could not be made to wear any clothes, that he was absent from Kabati at the time she disappeared, and that on his return he had made every effort to find her.

The third accused's defence was that he had left Kabati about six weeks before the girl's disappearance and was absent in another chiefdom at the time of her disappearance; that on the 10th June, 1911, he arrived at Yandehun, where he had a "wife," and then for the first time heard of what had happened in Kabati, whither he immediately returned.

The prisoners were defended by counsel, and forty-five witnesses were examined in the case.

The chief witness for the Crown was the accomplice who had turned informer. His evidence on one or two points one could not help regarding with suspicion, though on the other hand he gave his evidence freely; he was quite open, there was little hesitancy, he did not shelter himself under generalities, but was always prepared to go into details. In view of the fact that he had given evidence upon so many different occasions, and that he had to keep in mind so many different meetings, one was struck with the small

number of inconsistencies, and every now and then it was noticeable how two unconnected details fitted in with the rest of the evidence ; then the further he was cross-examined the more truthful did his narrative appear, matters which seemed doubtful at first were cleared up, and at the end his evidence seemed stronger than at the beginning, and formed a marked contrast to the evidence of many of the other witnesses. Finally an inspection of the *locus in quo* tended to confirm his testimony. But this witness being an accomplice, corroboration of his evidence as to each of the accused was necessary before the question could be considered as to whether or not the accused were guilty of murder. There was ample corroboration as to the circumstances of the murder, and that it was committed by members of the Human Leopard Society, but in addition to this it was necessary that there should be corroboration of the evidence of the accomplices as to the identity of each of the persons charged.

On the question whether it was proved that the first accused, the Mahawa or paramount chief, took part in the murder of the girl Mini the Court was divided and the majority were in favour of a verdict of NOT GUILTY. This man was, however, deposed from the chieftainship, and has, on the recommendation of the majority of the Court, in accordance with the provisions of the Special Commission Court Ordinance, been expelled from the Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone.

There was ample corroboration as well as strong circumstantial evidence against the second accused, the uncle of deceased, and he was found guilty of

murder and publicly executed at Imperri on the 2nd June, 1913.

There was some doubt as to the identity of the third accused. Another person of the same name appears to have figured prominently in the conferences of the Society. He was therefore found not guilty and discharged.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE YANDEHUN CASE

THIS case was one which created exceptional interest locally by reason of the fact that the accused was a minister of religion and a man well known in the Colony and Protectorate. He was connected with the United Brethren in Christ Mission and had been a minister of religion since 1878.

The accused, who was defended by four members of the Freetown Bar, was first charged with the capital crime of murder, but after some evidence had been given the Crown Prosecutor realized that he had not sufficient evidence to secure a conviction on that charge, and intimated that he proposed to call no further evidence, whereupon a formal verdict of Not Guilty was recorded.

The accused was then proceeded against on the following charges—(i) of being a member of the Human Leopard Society on or before the 5th November, 1912, the date of the Human Leopard Amendment Ordinance, 1912, and (ii) with having taken part in the operations of an unlawful society on the 17th October, 1909.

The accused had apparently been well educated, and whilst he was in the witness-box it was difficult to conceive how a man of his stamp could possibly be



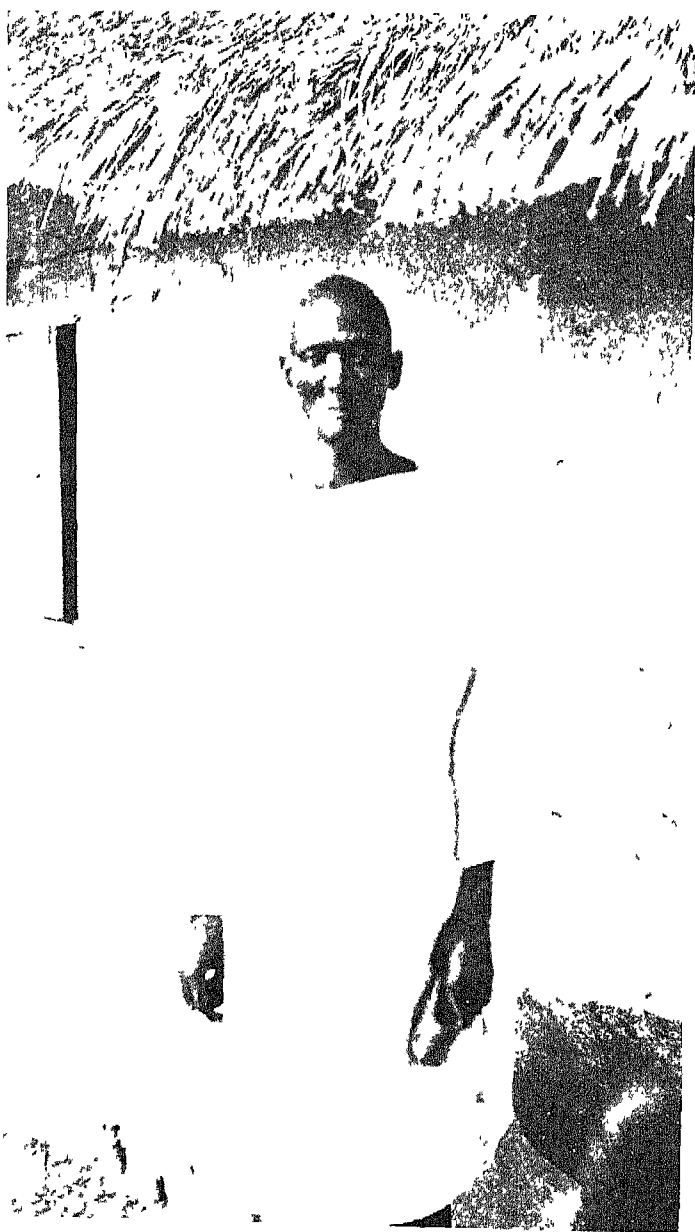
connected with a cannibal society; on the other hand, it was undisputed that he had permitted himself to be elected Mahawa (paramount chief) of one of the chiefdoms in the Protectorate, and had acted in that capacity from 1899 to 1905, which connotes much; and he stated that he only ceased to be Mahawa after his trial upon a charge of cannibal murder which took place before a judge and jury in Bonthé in 1905.

The case for the prosecution depended chiefly upon the evidence of two informers. Upon the depositions their testimony was corroborated by the evidence of two witnesses, one of whom was a petty trader and the other a teacher in another branch of the United Brethren in Christ Mission, but, as these witnesses when before the Special Commission Court swore that their previous statements were false, the case for the prosecution was left to depend almost solely upon the evidence of the two informers.

These two informers stated that towards the last quarter of 1909 (cutting-rice time) a meeting of the Human Leopard Society was called near Yandehun for the purpose of arranging for a certain newly appointed Mahawuru (sub-chief) to provide a victim to celebrate his appointment. At that meeting a number of important persons were present, and it was settled that the Mahawuru should give a girl to whom he stood *in loco parentis*, and that the murder should take place on the evening of the fourth day from that.

On the evening arranged the two informers and many others arrived at the appointed place, the Mahawuru enticed the girl to the spot, and he and his





A SELF-CONFESSED CANNIBAL.

Lavari set upon her and killed her. Her body was divided up and one of the informers was despatched with a portion of the girl's flesh to the accused and another member who had not attended the meeting. He handed over this flesh to this other member and asked him to give the accused his portion.

The next morning the informer went to the town of Victoria and saw the accused at the French Company's Factory, and informed him that he had been sent to ask him whether he had received a share of the "meat" that was sent for him, to which the accused replied that he had received it. The informer stated that the accused then said, "All right, I am now going. I only came for that purpose," and that the accused then took the road leading in the direction of Mobundo (New London), which is situated farther down the river and is one of the starting-places when going by water to Bonthe.

If that story was true, there could be no doubt that the "meat" was a portion of the body of the murdered girl, and an admission by the accused to a member of the Human Leopard Society that he had received such "meat" would have been conclusive proof that he was a member of that Society.

Both the informers also stated that they saw one of the witnesses, a petty trader, at the French Company's Factory on that particular occasion, and also the school-teacher referred to. That was practically all, apart from proof of the girl's disappearance at the time in question, that the prosecution could prove at the trial.

Upon the depositions, however, the case was much stronger. At the preliminary investigation in

the District Commissioner's Court the previous September the petty trader referred to stated that about two and a half years before September, 1912, early one morning he saw one of the informers and the accused coming out of the French Company's Store. He further said that he got the school-teacher referred to to write a letter to a person at Moyamba, but he did not actually connect this letter with the day on which he saw the informer and the accused together. He admitted that the school-teacher had written a letter for him, that he took this letter to a person at Moyamba, and that just before he started for Moyamba with that letter he went to the French Company's Store to get some provisions ; but he denied, when before the Special Commission Court, having seen either the informer or the accused there.

The school-teacher in his depositions at the preliminary investigation in September, 1912, gave important corroborative evidence. He there said that the accused came to Victoria on the 17th October, 1909, and stayed the night with him ; that the accused went out about 9 p.m. and returned about 10 p.m. with two persons (who had since been executed for leopard murder), and that these two stayed with him for about a quarter of an hour ; that next morning the accused went to the French Company's Factory and came back to the house ; that he asked the accused to stay and preach for him, but the accused said " No," that he was in haste, as the Government, since his previous trial, never allowed him to come to Victoria, and the witness fixed the date by saying that the petty trader came to him the same morning to have the above-mentioned letter

written. This letter was produced and identified, and was dated 18th October, 1909. At this preliminary investigation this witness, when cross-examined by counsel for the accused, said further, "I am certain that the accused slept at Victoria on the night of October 17th, 1909." He also said in cross-examination that he was certain that accused came there only for the purpose of collecting subscriptions for the Mission to which he belonged, and that on this occasion he got a subscription from at least one other person besides himself. But before the Special Commission Court all this was changed. The keystone of the accused's defence was that his collections at Victoria were made on or about the 17th December, 1909, and that he only paid this one visit to Victoria during the year 1909, and these two witnesses, when before the Special Commission Court, made their evidence fit in with this defence.

The school-teacher witness was married to a niece of the accused, and both he and the petty trader witness admitted having gone back on their statements about seeing the accused in Victoria in October, 1909, after an interview with the son of the accused—who was also connected with the United Brethren in Christ Mission.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of outside influences to vary the evidence of important witnesses for the prosecution gave rise to grave suspicion, but the net result so far as the actual charges were concerned was that the prosecution was left without corroboration of the evidence of the accomplices.

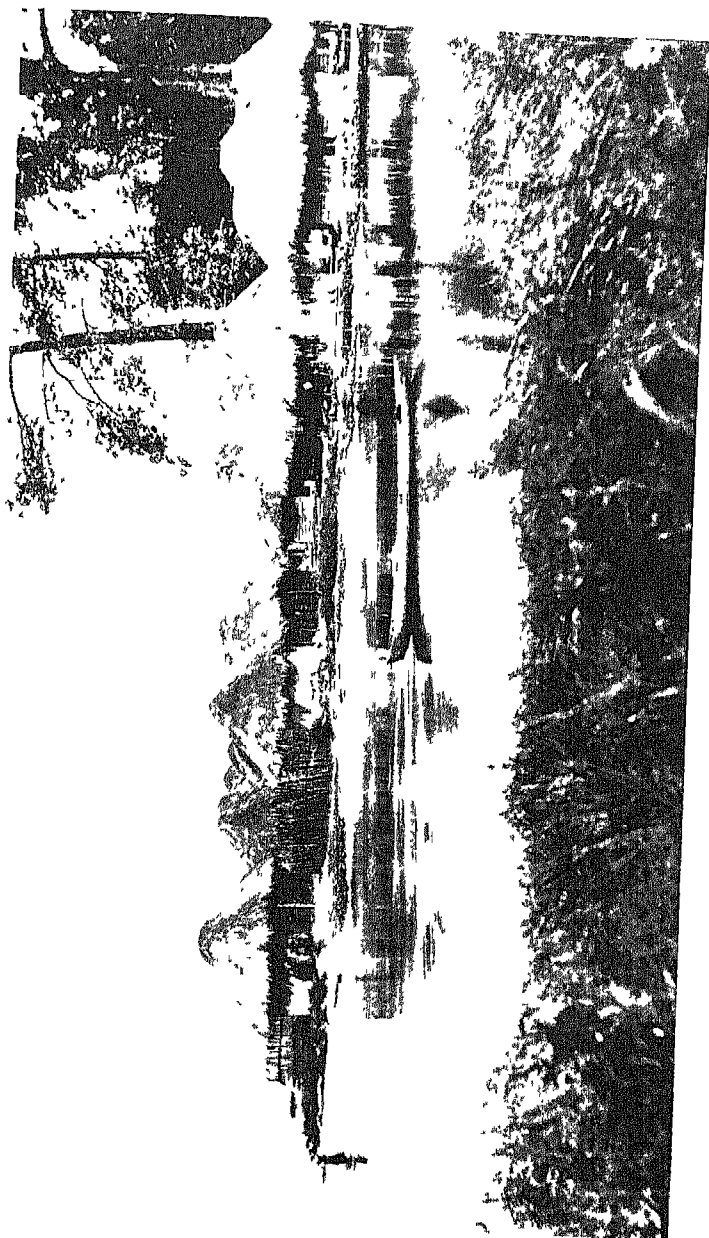
<sup>1</sup> These two witnesses were subsequently prosecuted for perjury before the Circuit Court and found guilty.

Had the only issue before the Court been the charges recorded, it is possible that counsel for the defence would not have called any witnesses, but would have claimed a verdict upon the evidence; but the Court drew attention to Section 11 of the Special Commission Court Ordinance, 1912, which declared that notwithstanding an acquittal, if the Court is of opinion that it is expedient for the security, peace, or order of the district that the acquitted person should be expelled therefrom, the Court shall report to the Governor, who may expel such person from the Colony and Protectorate accordingly.

Counsel for the defence therefore decided not to let the matter rest there, but to call evidence so as to exonerate the accused completely if it were possible to do so.

The accused himself first went into the witness-box and proved by letters to persons connected with his Mission in Freetown that in September, 1909, he had arranged to make a tour of his district early in October. He gave evidence to the effect that he started on the 20th October, proceeded up certain rivers some distance from Victoria, and that he remained in those parts preaching and giving magic-lantern entertainments, with the object of obtaining subscriptions for his mission, until early in December, when he came to New London (Mobundo), which he reached on the morning of the 7th December, 1909.

He related how he had gone to the school-teacher's house at Victoria and then to the French Company's Factory and then to one King, and how he had got subscriptions, only spending an hour or two at Victoria. He stated that he then walked to the out-



A WATER-SIDE VILLAGE.





lying villages and obtained subscriptions from persons named Nicoll and Cole, that he then returned to New London, where he picked up his boat and started home for Bonthe, which he reached early on the morning of the 8th December. In corroboration of his story he produced the subscription book which he kept during the tour, and in which there can be little doubt that the names of King, Powell, Nicoll, and Cole written by themselves appear in their due places after the subscriptions given during the earlier period of the tour.

These subscriptions seemed to be perfectly genuine, the entries of the names seemed perfectly genuine, the whole book bore every appearance of being quite genuine. King and Nicoll, two respectable traders, proved their signatures in the book and said that they put them there in December 1909. In some details the evidence of King was inconsistent with that of the accused and his boatman, but this pointed to little more than that there had been no collusion.

Several servants of the accused were also called as witnesses for the defence, and a number of discrepancies were found to exist in the various accounts given of the circumstances connected with the trip to Victoria—a matter not without importance, as one at least of these servants would probably have accompanied the accused if he visited Victoria in October as well as December.

One thing was quite clear: viz., that the accused was at Victoria in or about December, 1909, and that he then collected subscriptions. The question therefore naturally arose as to whether his presence in December was inconsistent with his presence there on

the 17th and 18th October. There could be no doubt that it was not. It is true that he had produced evidence that he was only at Victoria once during the year 1909, but this evidence was not of high value. There was nothing to prevent the accused having been at Victoria on the 17th and 18th October. His letters to Freetown showed that he had intended to begin his tour early in October, but his start was delayed until the 20th. The first Human Leopard meeting at Yandehun was, according to the prosecution, on the 13th October; prominent members of the Society would have had notice of this meeting prior to the 13th October. Assuming that the accused had such notice, he would have received it just about the time he had originally meant to start, and this would account for his start being delayed until the 20th of October. And the view that he made a surreptitious visit to Victoria for unlawful purposes was strongly supported by the fact that the witnesses for the Crown who testified to his visit had been tampered with. Then the chain of facts worked out by the prosecution connecting the witnesses and the letter of 18th October with the accused's visit, though not sufficient to be of itself corroboration, was significant confirmation of the story of the informers.

The Court in giving judgment stated that, as the accused was a man of education and a minister of religion connected with a Missionary Society, they had been slow to form an opinion adverse to him, but that after careful and anxious consideration they were unwillingly forced to the opinion that he was so connected with the Human Leopard Society that it

was expedient for the security, peace and order of the District that he should be expelled from the Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone; and this was accordingly done.

This man, who was born in America, successfully raised his American citizenship on the previous occasion when he was indicted for cannibal murder. The trial of a person residing in the Protectorate for an indictable offence ordinarily takes place before the Circuit Court Judge and assessors, who take the place of a jury, the assessors being usually native chiefs who sit with the judge and advise him on questions concerning native law and custom. At the close of the case the judge sums up to them as he would to a jury, and they individually give their opinion as to the guilt or otherwise of the person being tried. The judge, although he is not bound by their opinions, naturally attaches a good deal of weight to them, but the final verdict is left entirely with him. Non-natives, however, have the right, when charged with a capital offence, to be tried by a judge and jury in the Colony instead of the Circuit Court Judge and assessors, and the plea to the jurisdiction was successfully raised by counsel when the accused was before the Circuit Court, on the ground that he was an American subject and therefore a non-native so far as the provision regulating the trial of natives of the Protectorate was concerned. The case was then transferred to Bonthe, where he was found Not Guilty by a jury of educated natives. After his acquittal he rejoined the United Brethren in Christ Mission and went on a lecturing tour through America on behalf of the Mission. One of the Euro-

pean members of the Mission who was present during the trial of the case before the Special Commission Court stated that he had heard him lecture in the United States, and that by his eloquence and interesting description of Sierra Leone he drew large audiences and was successful in collecting a considerable sum of money for Mission purposes. He is also known in England, where he had many friends; on several occasions he has been the guest of persons in high position, to whom his trial upon a charge of cannibal murder must have come as a most unpleasant shock.





HINTERLAND TYPES.

## CHAPTER VII

### BORFIMA AND MEMBERSHIP CASES

THE first of these cases was one against an important person who held high office in the Imperri Chiefdom. The charge against him was that in or about the month of July, 1912, he had in his possession without lawful authority or excuse certain articles, to wit a native medicine commonly known as "Borfima," and a "kukoi" or whistle, contrary to section 2 of Ordinance No. 28 of 1909 (The Human Leopard Society Ordinance) as amended by Section 7 of Ordinance No. 17 of 1912. There were two other counts charging him with (i) the custody and (ii) the control of the "Borfima" and "Kukoi" mentioned above. The accused was a man of striking personality, and appears to have exercised a great influence in the Imperri Chiefdom.

The facts of the case were simple. In July, 1912, it was stated by members of the Society who had turned King's evidence that he had been present at several meetings of the Human Leopard Society and had taken a prominent part in the preliminary arrangements for securing various victims, and that he had at these meetings produced the "mother" Borfima of the Imperri Chiefdom. In these circumstances he was arrested and his houses at Gbangbama and Victoria were watched by Court Messengers.



Early one morning the senior Court Messenger saw one of the accused's wives leave the house at Gbangbama with a bundle. He followed her, and when she saw that there was no escape she threw the bundle down and ran away. This bundle held, amongst other things, an iron pot containing "medicine."

The accused admitted that the "medicine" was his, and made a statement as to how it had come into his possession. This will be best described in his own words: "I am a sick man. My sickness arose over a dream. A snake swallowed me up to my waist. I screamed and then awakened. In the morning I was unable to move. My legs and body up to the place where the snake had swallowed me became 'dead.' I remained like that for four years. I heard that there was a Mori Man at a town called Behol, and sent a messenger for him. I employed this man to make a medicine for me and I paid him £3 for it. That is the sebbeh (charm) which was in the pot which the Court Messenger took from my wife. The Mori Man told me that I would not dream again, and that the lassimo (medicine) would ward off ill-health and bad dreams so long as I always kept it with me. Ah! if he were not dead I would not be here" (meaning that had the Mori Man been living it would not have been in the power of the white man to interfere with him).

The accused caused some amusement in Court by describing how the senior Court Messenger brought the sebbeh to Gombo-kabbo ("Fire in the grass," the native name for the Assistant District Commissioner), and how he heard him shout out in a triumphant voice,

which he imitated, "I have brought Daddy Borfima—come and see!"

He likewise imitated the voices of the two ex-members of the Human Leopard Society who were witnesses against him. One of these men had a deep voice and the other's voice was just the reverse, but this did not appear to present any difficulty to this extraordinarily good mimic.

Evidence was given that he bore the mark of the Human Leopard Society. His retort was that even in England people have marks. He went on to say that the people were beginning to say that the white man "is bad," but that it was not altogether the white man's fault, as he was being misled by the persons who said they had been members of the Human Leopard Society and now, to save themselves, gave evidence for the prosecution. He gave one to understand that words failed him to express his contempt for these persons, and that if they had to deal with them under native law they would know what to do.

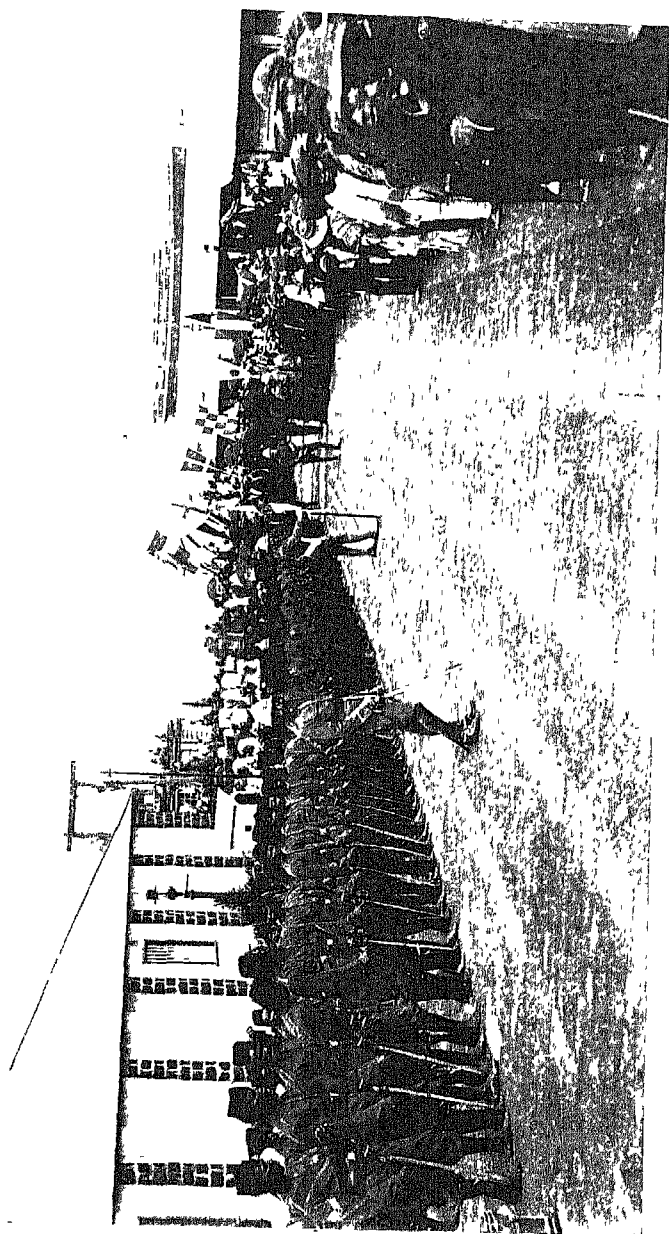
He described how the District Commissioner had forced him to throw the Borfima into a fire made for that purpose; and how he had protested against this, stating that he had lost good money over its destruction. He went on to pay a subtle compliment to the Court by saying, "We were thinking in this country that there were no judges in England until you 'daddies' arrived."

Although the accused very ably defended himself, there was no doubt from the evidence of the witnesses that the medicine in question was Borfima. It was also proved very clearly that he was one of

the leaders in the Human Leopard Society. Found Guilty, and asked if he had anything to say why sentence should not be passed on him, he replied : " I am the cow with the short tail, God will drive the flies away. The Judges, you, represent God. You didn't believe when I spoke of those men who said they belonged to the Leopard Society. I see the result now."

A sentence of fourteen years' imprisonment with hard labour was passed on this man, who, even after the passing of the sentence, had a last word of protest and pathetic appeal. As he was leaving the Court, he burst out, " I am an old man, fourteen years is a longer time than I will live : Judges, if you must have my life take it at once ; the soldiers are there with their guns to shoot"—the military guard round the Court-house when the Court was sitting.

It may be mentioned in connection with this case that the prisoner, without any family influence, had gained an ascendancy over the people of the Chiefdom unequalled by even the Chief himself. Some years ago he was tried for Leopard murder, but was acquitted, and from that date he appears to have been marked out as a person of distinction. It was asserted that his " medicine " was sufficiently strong to guard him against all bad trouble that might be put upon him, and he was selected as the custodian of the chief " medicine " of the Human Leopard Society known as the " Mother Borfima." When fresh Borfima was made it was necessary that a small portion should be taken from the parent Borfima, and this formed the foundation for the new Borfima.



WEST AFRICAN SOLDIERS



Another interesting native was brought before the Court in the person of a Chief from the southern portion of the Protectorate near the Liberian frontier, charged with a similar offence. The District Commissioner obtained information that this man had in his possession the "medicine" belonging to a branch of the Society, and Court Messengers were detailed to search his house, with the result that a large quantity of "medicine" of various sorts was discovered and produced before the Court.

The accused in his defence stated that he had been one of the leaders of the "War boys," who operated with the British force during the 1898 Rebellion, and that the "medicine" produced had been seized by the War boys from the rebels and was afterwards deposited for safe keeping in his house; that the War boys had never returned to claim these curiosities or trophies, and that the bags in which the "medicine" had been kept had never been opened up until their seizure by the Court Messengers. There was reliable evidence that a portion of the "medicine" was Borfima, and it was apparent that some of the leather wrappings round it had recently been repaired. From the evidence it was clear that the prisoner had made use of the "medicine" for unlawful purposes, and he was therefore found Guilty; but as he had been a great warrior and had rendered valuable service to the Government during the 1898 Rebellion, a comparatively light sentence was passed on him.

Another Chief from yet another part of the country was indicted for being in possession of Borfima without lawful authority. There was also a second charge against him of having in his possession a

Kukoi, i.e. a special kind of whistle used for calling together members of the Human Leopard Society. Information reached the District Commissioner of the Island of Sherbro during the month of August, 1912, that the accused had Borfima in his possession. This man was known to be of a rather truculent disposition, and it was considered desirable that there should be some show of force when his chief town was visited for the purpose of effecting his arrest, as otherwise some resistance might have been met with by the officers detailed for this duty. An armed party of the West African Frontier Force accordingly made a surprise visit and surrounded his house, and effected his arrest without any resistance being offered. His house was then searched and a quantity of "medicines" found which were produced in Court.

The accused admitted that the "medicines" belonged to him, but stated that they had been left to him by his predecessor, and that during his absence on one occasion while he was in Freetown they had been put in his dwelling-house, and that he, fearing these "medicines," had kept them locked up in a leather bag. He further denied that any of the "medicines" was Borfima. The witnesses for the prosecution all stated that a portion of the "medicines" was Borfima, and it was apparent that the wrappings of this particular "medicine" had been recently repaired.

The Court in delivering judgment pointed out that the accused, by keeping this medicine in his possession, gave himself and others the opportunity of using it, and that there was satisfactory evidence to show that it was not kept for curiosity or for

any legitimate object, but for an unlawful purpose ; however, as there was no evidence to show that the Borfima had been taken to the scenes of any of the recent murders, and there was no reason to believe it had, the Court took this into consideration in deciding on the punishment to be imposed on the accused. The sentence imposed was a term of two years' imprisonment with hard labour. The evidence regarding the Kukoi (whistle) was not considered reliable, and on this charge he was found not guilty.

A number of other cases besides those mentioned occupied the time of the Court for some weeks, and among them were a number of cases in which prisoners were charged with being members of the Human Leopard Society. As there were so many persons under arrest on this charge, the Crown decided to proceed only against the important men concerned. Most of these men were defended by counsel, who examined the witnesses for the prosecution at great length, but in many cases they were unable to shake their evidence. A number of these prisoners were proved to have been present at various meetings of the Society at which the details of several murders had been arranged, and the Court in giving judgment stated that on the facts proved such persons were really accessories before the fact to these murders and might on the evidence have been found guilty on the capital charge had they been prosecuted for it, and in those cases the Court felt compelled to pass the maximum sentence of fourteen years' imprisonment with hard labour.

The only other case of interest was one in which a man of some importance in his chieftdom was charged



with having in his possession without lawful authority a certain article, to wit an iron needle of a peculiar shape used for marking on initiation members of the Human Leopard Society.

The possession of this article is made an offence under the Human Leopard Society Ordinance, punishable with imprisonment up to fourteen years. The case resolved itself chiefly into a discussion on a point of law, the arguments in the case all turning on the word "branding."

The case for the prosecution was that iron needles, made specially for the purpose, were used in the following way: the needle was inserted under the skin, the skin and flesh were raised, a razor then cut under or over the needle in such a way as to make a small wound from which blood flowed. A preparation called Nikori was then placed on the wound, and the result was a peculiar scar or mark. It was contended that an iron needle used for that purpose could be held to be a needle used for branding persons.

For the defence it was argued by counsel that "branding" a person meant applying a hot iron to his person, and that marking a person was not the same as branding him; that the word "branding" by itself contained the idea of burning, that the Statute was a highly penal Statute giving exceptionally large powers to the Executive and imposing a heavy punishment for breach of its provisions. It was further argued that the needle was not even for "marking" members—that it was the razor which actually made the mark; that although the needle might be used in the process of marking it was no more used for "marking" the person than the hand which held it.





THE PRISONERS OF A NATIVE CHIEFTAINNESS, CRACKING PALM-KERNELS

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The Court held that the needle could not be held to be used for "branding," and found the accused not guilty, and he was discharged.

The Crown Prosecutor entered a *nolle prosequi* in the case of a number of other prisoners who had been committed for trial but against whom he did not consider that he had sufficient evidence to justify him in proceeding further, and these men, so far as the charges on which they were committed for trial were concerned, were discharged from custody.

This completed the work of the Special Commission Court, which, after sitting continuously from the 18th December, 1912, concluded its sittings on the 15th May, 1913.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OTHER CASES OF LEOPARD MURDER; THE HUMAN BABOON SOCIETY

ALTHOUGH the work of the Special Commission Court was completed on the 15th May, 1913, there were at that date a large number of persons still in custody who had not been committed for trial, and who therefore did not come within the purview of that Court. It was decided that the District Commissioner should hold an Enquiry under the Protectorate Ordinance and report whether on the evidence given against any of these men he considered such persons to be a danger to the peace of the community.

The first enquiry made was in regard to charges preferred against a number of men of the Imperri and Jung Chiefdoms of being connected with the Human Leopard Society. Evidence was given by informers that all these men were members of or connected with the Human Leopard Society, and mention was made of a number of murders by the Society previously unknown to the Authorities. Apart from the evidence of the informers there was ample evidence to show that a number of these men had actually assisted members of the Society, and the Governor-in-Council approved of the deportation of twelve sub-chiefs and fourteen of the principal Headmen of

## OTHER CASES OF LEOPARD MURDER 81

the Imperri and Jong Chiefdoms from the Northern Sherbro District.

The next enquiry was in regard to charges made against thirty-six sub-Chiefs and principal men of the Gallinas Chiefdom. Three informers gave evidence that they had been members of the Human Leopard Society and had, during their membership, been present at a number of murders, each of these men admitting having given a victim himself and giving details regarding the sacrifices. They said that all the persons who were the subject of the enquiry were members of the Society, and specified the various murders at which each of them had been present; they also gave further evidence regarding the leopard mark and exhibited the marks which they had received on initiation.

One of the witnesses was a boy aged eighteen years. His story was that one evening in the previous year, as he was returning home from a visit to a neighbouring village, night overtook him, and by mistake he took a path leading to the Poro bush at Powolu, where he fell into a number of people. He spoke to them, but no one answered. He then got afraid and commenced to run away, when he was seized by some one who was assisted by several others to make him a fast prisoner. He was then dragged inside the Poro bush and a discussion took place, which he was able to hear, as to whether they should kill him or not. The majority of the members were for immediately killing him in accordance with the rules of the Society, but it was pointed out that another victim had already been secured, and further that as their prisoner was the son of a man of some

importance his absence might give rise to some awkward inquiries. It was therefore agreed to give him the alternative of becoming a member of the Society or of being immediately killed. The witness stated that he agreed to join the Society. Borfima was then brought, and the "big man" of the Society explained to him that the Borfima was the "mother" of the Society and should be treated with the greatest veneration; that they were its children and therefore brothers to each other, and in order to join him to their brotherhood some of his blood had to be given to the Borfima to drink; that when the blood was taken from him he should bear the pain inflicted bravely and should not utter a sound, as otherwise it would displease their "medicine" and might result in his being punished in some unexpected way. The "Master" then marked him on the left buttock by cutting a slice of flesh away and rubbing the blood that exuded from the wound on to the Borfima. He was then made to swear an oath on the Borfima not to reveal the secrets of the Society, and was forced to be present and witness the killing of a girl who had been brought to the Poro bush, and was made to eat some of the flesh of this victim.

Although there was no direct evidence apart from that of accomplices, it was clear from the testimony of independent witnesses that all these persons were so connected with the Society as to make it desirable to have them removed from the Gallinas District, where it was stated they exercised great influence over the people. All these men, with the exception of eight sub-Chiefs who absconded to Liberia, have since been deported to







LADIES OF THE SIERRA LEONE HINTERLAND.

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the Karina and Koinadugu Districts of the Protectorate.

Some light was thrown on the means used to terrorize the ordinary members of the community into keeping silence regarding anything they may have heard concerning the crimes committed by the Society. When it was discovered that the Government officers were making enquiries regarding the Society an attempt was made "to swear" the whole country—that is, to put all the people under an oath of secrecy. In one Chiefdom this was done by swearing every one who was likely to be able to give any information on a "medicine" called Tillah. If a person breaks an oath on this "medicine," even though he does so unwittingly, the natives believe that the medicine will catch him and will infect him with a disease which first attacks his lips and nose, which it eats away, and which eventually kills him. There are a few lepers in this Chiefdom, and they are pointed out as people who have broken, though perhaps unintentionally, an oath taken on the Tillah.

Another exhibit which was produced in one of the cases before the Special Commission Court was a stone image which is looked upon by the Gallinas people in the light of a Deity. It is known by the name of Toniahun. The meaning of the word Toniahun is "turn back to truth." The figure has been carved out from soapstone by some ancient sculptor, and its features are more of the Arab than the Negro type. No woman will look at this image for fear of becoming sterile, and they cover their eyes if they approach it. This figure, notwithstanding its name, was apparently also used for swearing

persons on—i.e. to force them to state that they knew nothing of the Human Leopard Society—and so great is the fear of the Society and the various “medicines” employed by it that even the parents of children who have been seized as victims cannot be induced to assist the Authorities in bringing the guilty parties to justice. Prior to July, 1912, no case of Human Leopardism or cannibalism had ever been reported to have taken place in the Gallinas Country, and the Authorities had no reason to suspect that any had taken place. It was not until after a number of arrests had been made in other Districts that it was brought to light that a flourishing branch of the Human Leopard Society had existed in that District for many years, and details of about a score of murders were given by members of the Society who had turned informers. Although the existence of the Society must have been known to hundreds of people, many of whom went about in terror of it, the fear of the “medicines” of the Society acted as a sufficient deterrent to keep the matter from the ears of all Europeans in that part of the country, thus demonstrating the fear that an ordinary native has of doing or saying anything which might bring him into collision with the members of the Human Leopard Society, who might, with the aid of their “medicines,” punish him in some fearful and unexpected way.

The fact that the majority of the persons who were convicted or deported under the Special Commission Court Ordinance were important members of the Human Leopard Society must have the salutary effect of breaking up for the time being this criminal organization; nevertheless, unless vigorous measures





A NATIVE CHIEFTAINESS.

are pursued and unless that part of the country is more effectively policed, it is more than probable that the killing of an occasional victim in order to renew their fetishes will be continued. It must be a gradual evolution, which will be brought about by the natives of those parts coming more in touch with European influence and gradually losing faith in the potency of their "medicines."

While the Special Commission Court was sitting three murders occurred in the Koinadugu District, which hitherto as far as official knowledge goes was entirely free from cannibalism of any kind. According to the evidence given by a number of witnesses, the people of the Symira Chiefdom had a very vexed question to settle in the selection from a number of aspirants of a Paramount Chief as a successor to their late Chief who died the previous year, and who left no near male relative who could of right claim to succeed to the Chiefdom; and it was suggested by these witnesses that the victims were provided as propitiatory offerings by candidates for the Chiefdom.

A small girl aged about seven years was killed at Nerekora toward the end of December, 1912; two days later another small girl about twelve years of age was killed at Bafai; and early the following month another girl aged about twelve to thirteen years was killed at Nerekora. All these deaths were at first attributed to attacks by bush leopards, but the evidence given by various witnesses was to the effect that these three girls were murdered by members of the Human Leopard Society.

Another secret society known as the Human

Baboon Society, which exists in one of the northern Districts of the Protectorate, first came to notice about five years ago, when a number of persons were charged before the Circuit Court with the murder of a small child. During the investigation connected with the death of the child, it came to light that a number of persons in the vicinity of Port Lokkoh in the Karina District had banded themselves together and had formed a society which has since become known as the Human Baboon Society. In the case mentioned no evidence could be obtained to corroborate the statements of the informers, and the accused were found not guilty and discharged from custody.

During the month of May, 1913, a small girl was killed near the village of Bokamp, and, according to statements made by persons who turned informers, she was murdered by members of the Human Baboon Society. Their statements were to the following effect: That this Society was formed about six years ago, and consists of twenty-one members made up of eleven men and ten women; that seven victims, all young children, had been provided at various times for the Society; that at their meetings one of the members of the Society dresses himself in a Baboon skin and attacks the victim with his teeth; that the spirit of all members of the Society becomes centred in the person who is for the time being wearing the Baboon skin, which, when not in use, is kept in a small forest, where it is guarded by an evil spirit, and that the "Baboon" bites pieces out of the victim which the other members of the Society devour.

The only explanation that the informers could or

would give as to the objects of the Society was that the founder of it had quarrelled with his tribal ruler, who he alleged liberated one of the founders' slaves and placed him in authority over him; that he, the owner of the slave, became so incensed that he turned himself into a "witch" and induced others to join him in doing "evil things."

Objects and reasons other than those given by the informers probably exist, but it is doubtful whether they will ever be discovered.

The information in the hands of the Authorities, however, appears to be sufficient to allow of effective measures being taken to put an end to the existence of this Society.



## PART II

### CHAPTER IX

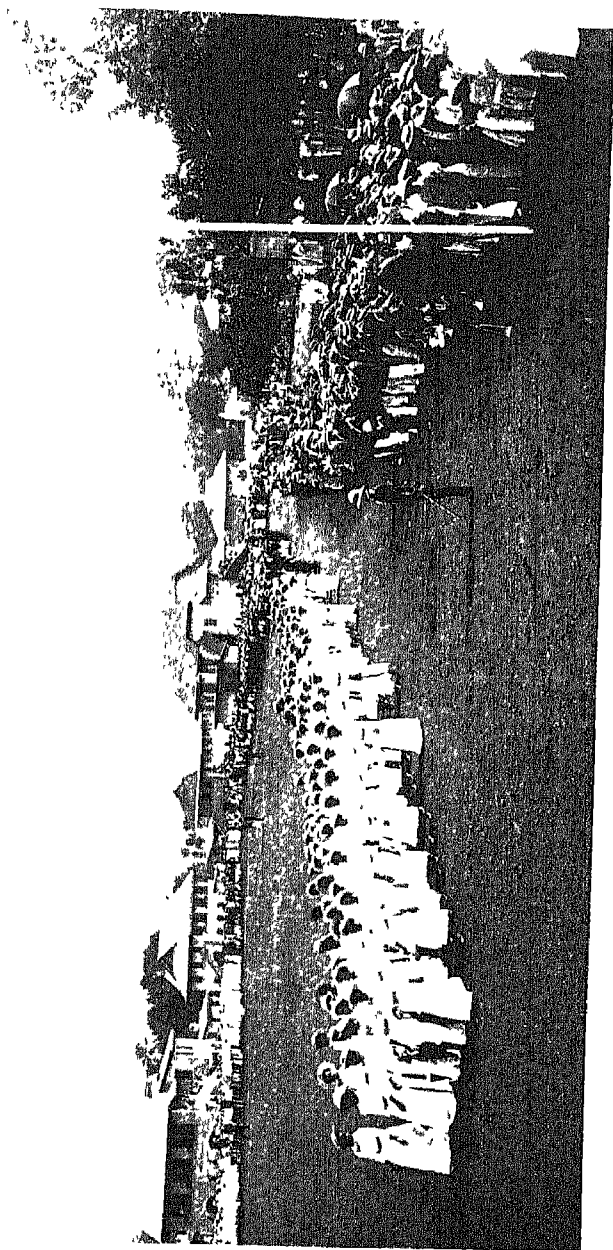
#### A NOTE ON SIERRA LEONE, PAST AND PRESENT

IN acknowledging the congratulations of the people of Sierra Leone on the occasion of his coronation, King George V referred to the Colony as "my ancient and loyal Sierra Leone." There is no question about the Colony being an ancient one and one of the earliest though perhaps not one of the brightest jewels of His Majesty's now mighty Colonial Empire.

The harbour of Sierra Leone was discovered by the Portuguese towards the end of the fourteenth century, and was named by its discoverers Sierra Leone from supposing the mountains to abound in lions, though it has also been asserted that the name was derived from the noise of the surf on the shores, which resembles the roar of a lion.

At the present day there are no lions to be found along the coast of tropical West Africa, but it is not improbable that they were numerous in the days of the early Portuguese explorers and roared a challenge to their ships when they put in to land.

The following lines by T. B. Rhodes in his "*Bombastes Furioso*," apropos of Col. Titus' speech in the House of Commons on the Exclusion Bill on the 7th January, 1681, shows that it was generally



EMPIRE DAY IN FREETOWN.



accepted as a fact that lions abounded along the Coast of West Africa, which was the only part of Tropical Africa known to Europeans in those days :—

“So have I heard on Afric's burning shore  
A hungry lion give a grievous roar :  
The grievous roar echoed along the shore.  
So have I heard on Afric's burning shore  
Another lion give a grievous roar,  
And the first lion thought the last a bore.”

The coast-line and the rivers of Sierra Leone were explored by Pedro de Cintra, a distinguished Portuguese navigator, in the year 1462, and this constituted one of the last of the Portuguese discoveries carried on under the direct influence and authority of Don Henry, the founder and father of modern maritime discovery, who died the following year.

The record of the voyage so far as it affects Sierra Leone is described as follows :—

“On quitting St. Jago we steered southerly by Rio Grande, which is on the north of Ethiopia, beyond which we came to the high mountain of Sierra Leone, the summit of which is continually enveloped in mist and out of which thunder and lightning almost perpetually flashes and is heard at sea from the distance of fifteen to twenty leagues.”

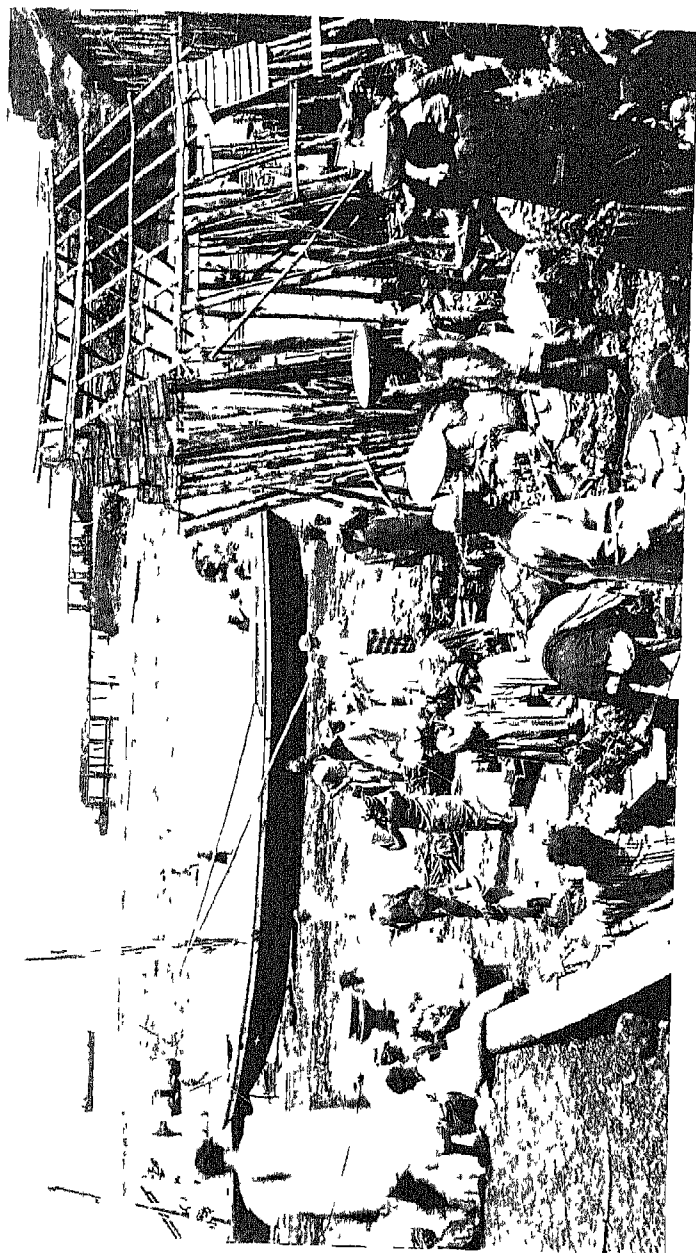
In 1481 the King of Portugal sent Susu, his ambassador, to Edward IV of England, claiming title under the Bull of the Pope, and requested Edward to forbid his subjects to navigate along the coast of Africa.

England first began to take an active interest in this part of Africa about the middle of the sixteenth century. In 1551, in the reign of Edward VI, some

London merchants sent an English ship to trade for gold, ivory, and Guinea pepper; and about three years later Captain John Lok brought back a valuable cargo consisting of gold, ivory, and Guinea pepper from what is now the Gold Coast Colony.

Sir John Hawkins landed at Sierra Leone on the 8th May, 1562, and it is recorded of him that he was the first Englishman who gave public countenance to the Slave Trade, which the Portuguese had been carrying on for some years. He brought three ships and took cargoes of slaves from Sierra Leone and other parts of West Africa and sold them to the Spanish settlements in America. After Captain Hawkins returned to England from his first voyage, Queen Elizabeth sent for him and expressed her concern lest any of the African negroes should be carried off without their free consent, which she declared would be detestable and would call down the vengeance of heaven upon the undertakers; but it is recorded that in the thirtieth year of her reign she was induced by the subtle persuasion of some of her subjects to grant patents for carrying on the slave trade from the north part of the Senegal to one hundred leagues beyond Sierra Leone.

Sir John Hawkins made three voyages from the coast of Africa to the West Indies and Spanish America with cargoes of slaves; and the good Queen Bess, having overcome her scruples regarding this lucrative trade, fitted out as a private enterprise two ships and sent them under the command of Hawkins, who lost the whole of her money, the ships being taken by the Spaniards. Sir Francis Drake, who at that time had command of the barque



WHERE HAWKINS MAY HAVE LANDED FOR SLAVES



of fifty tons called the *Judith*, escaped and returned to England.

It is not surprising that the name of the great Elizabethan hero, Hawkins, is not held in reverence by the inhabitants of Freetown, who assert that, far from being a national hero, if he had lived in the present day he would have been hanged for some of the acts committed on their forbears. In this connection a story is told of a prominent Sierra Leonean who, on hearing the words "Britons never shall be slaves" sung, remarked with some feeling, to a near neighbour, "But they have been—Julius Cæsar took them as slaves to Rome."

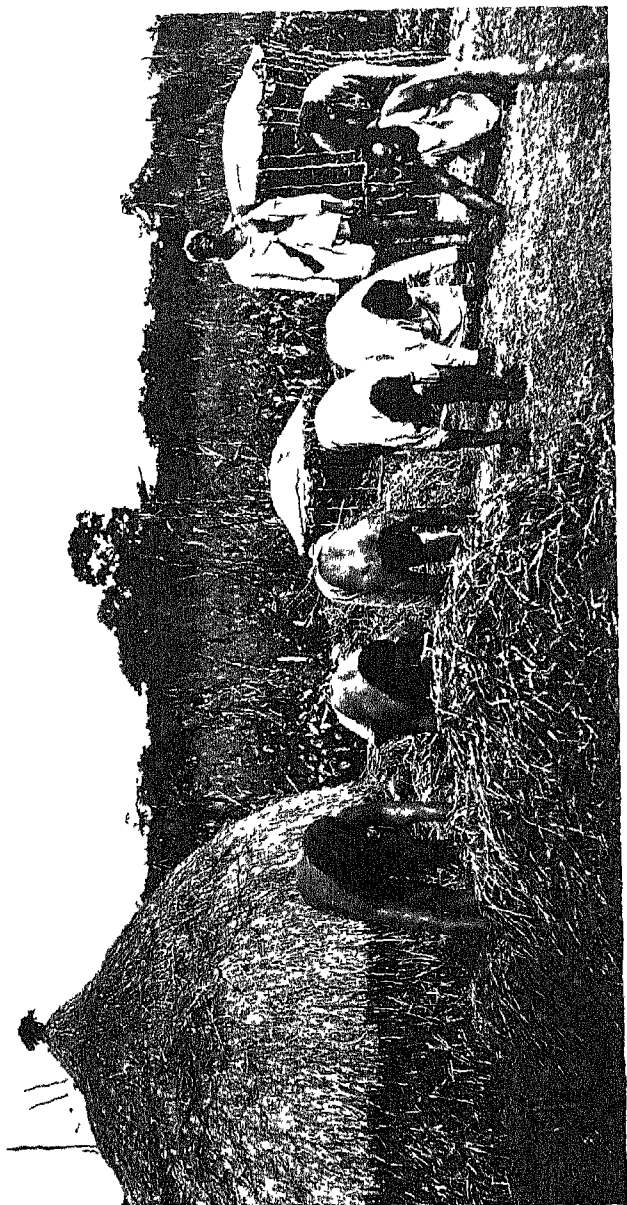
Captain Keeling, who visited Sierra Leone in August, 1607, wrote the following account of his visit:

"About 7 p.m. we anchored in twenty fathoms on hard sand, the south part of Ilha Verde bearing E. and the Cape of Sierra Leone, which is a low point, N. by E. about eight leagues distant. But the land over the Cape is very high, and may be seen fifteen leagues off in clear weather. About six next morning we made sail for the road, and had not less than 16, 15, 10 and 9 fathoms till we ranged north and south with the rocks which lie about one and a half miles west of Cape Sierra Leone; and when one mile from the nearest shore we had seven fathoms good shoaling between us and the rock. Immediately when past the rock we had 20 fathoms, and shoaled to 18, 16, 12 and 10 fathoms all the way into the roads, keeping very near the South shore; for a sand lies about two miles from the North shore or a league from the South shore, and upon it the sea continually breaks. We came to anchor in ten fathoms on good



ground, the point of Sierra Leone bearing W. by N., the north point of the bay N. by W., and the sand or breaker N.N.E. In the afternoon we were waved by some men on shore, to whom I sent my boat, which, leaving two hostages, brought off four negroes, who promised us refreshments. My skiff sounded between our anchorage and the breakers, finding fair shoaling, with two fathoms water within two boats-length of the beach or sand on which the sea breaks. All the previous observations of the variation, since our coming from 2 N. latitude to this place proved erroneous; for to each distance, having reference to any Meridian eastwards, there must be added 30 leagues, and from such as referred to western Meridians 30 leagues must be subtracted; for it appeared, by our falling in with the land, that the ship was so much more westerly than we supposed; myself, notwithstanding this error, being as much if not more westerly than any of the Mariners. Yet every man must trust to his own experience; for instruments may deceive, even in the hands of the most skilful. The 7th August some negroes of a superior appearance came aboard in my boat, for whom, as for all others, we had to leave one of our men in hostage for every two of them. These made signs that I should send some men up the country, and they would stay as hostages; I accordingly sent Edward Bradbury and my servant William Cotterell with a present to the Captain or chief, consisting of one coarse shirt, three feet of bar iron, a few glass beads, and two knives. They returned towards night, and brought me from the Captain one small gold earring worth some eight or nine shillings; and as it was late





THRESHING RICE SIERRA LEONE PROTECTORATE

the hostages remained all night on board without any one in pawn for them. I sent my boat, and brought off five tons of water, very good and easily come by.

“I went ashore on the 11th, when the people came to us, accompanied by their women, yet feared we might carry them away. We got plenty of lemons very cheap, as they gave us 200 for a penny knife. The 13th I bought an elephant tooth of 63 pounds weight for five yards of blue calico and seven or eight pounds of bar iron. The 15th in an hour and a half we took Six thousand excellent small fish called Cavallos. That afternoon we bought two or three thousand lemons at the Village. It rained so much at this place that we esteemed it a dry day when we had three hours of fair weather. The 16th I allowed our weekly workers to go on shore with me for recreation. In our walk we saw not above two or three acres sown with rice—the surface of the ground being mostly a hard rock. The 16th and 17th were quite fair; and on the latter I caused a quantity of lemon-water to be made. The 20th John Rogers returned and brought me a present of a piece of gold in form of a half-moon, worth five or six shillings. He reported the people to be peaceable, the chief without state, the landing to be two leagues up the river, and the chief's village eight miles from the landing. The 22nd I went on shore and made six or seven barricos full of lemon juice; having opened a firkin of knives belonging to the Company wherewith to buy limes. The afternoon of the 7th September we went all on shore to try if we could shoot an elephant, when we shot seven or eight bullets into him, and made him bleed exceedingly, as appeared

by his track ; but night coming on we had to go on board without effecting our purpose. The best road and watering place is the fourth bay to the east of Cape Sierra Leone. The tide where we rode flowed W.S.W., and the highest water upon a spring tide was at the least 12 feet. I made no observation of the sun in this road, neither aboard nor on shore, though I proposed to have so done several times ; but the Master made the road where we lay 8 36 N., Cape Sierra Leone being west, a league or four miles off. He also made the variation 1 50 eastwards ; but my instrument was out of order, and I had not time to put it in repair. We weighed from Sierra Leone the 14th September, with the wind all easterly ; but it soon fell calm, and we drove to the north, but drifted again S.W. by S., with the ebb, and when the flood again made, we anchored in 15½ fathoms, Cape Sierra Leone bearing N.E. by E. about seven leagues off. We had not less than ten fathoms all this day. The 16th we found the current setting N. by W.”

William Finch, a British merchant who also visited Sierra Leone during the year 1607, wrote the following lengthy and interesting account of his visit :

“The island which we fell in with lyeth some ten leagues south from the bay of Sierra Leone in lat. 8 N., has no inhabitants, neither did I learn its name. It has some plantains, and, by report, good watering and wooding for ships ; but about a league from the shore there is a dangerous ledge of rock, scarcely visible at high water. The bay of Sierra Leone is about three leagues broad, being high land on the South side, full of trees to the very edge of the water, and having several coves in which we caught plenty

and variety of fish. On the farther side of the fourth cove is the watering place, having excellent water continually running. Here on the rocks we found the names of various Englishmen who had been there. Among those was Sir Francis Drake, who had been there twenty-seven years before ; Thomas Candish, Captain Lister, and others. About the middle of the bay, right out from the third cove, lieth a sand, near about which there are not above two or three fathoms, but in most other parts eight or ten close in shore. The tide flows E.S.E., the highest water being six or eight feet, and the tide is very strong. The latitude is 8 30 N.

“ The King of Sierra Leone resides at the bottom of the bay, and is called by the Moors Borea, or Captain Caran, having other petty kings or chiefs under him ; one whom he called Captain Pinto, a wretched old man, dwells at a town within the second cove ; and on the other side of the bay is Captain Bolone. The Dominions of Borea stretch forty leagues inland, from which he receives a tribute in cotton cloth, elephants’ teeth and gold ; and has the power of selling his people as slaves, some of whom he offered to us. Some of them have been converted to Christianity by the Portuguese priests and Jesuits, who have a chapel, in which is a table inscribed with the days that are to be observed as holy. The King and a few of his principal attendants are decently clothed in jackets and breeches ; but the common people have only a slight cotton-cloth round their waists, while the women have a kind of short petticoat or apron down to their knees ; all the rest of their bodies, both men and women, being

quite naked ; the young people of both sexes having no dress whatever. All the people, both men and women, have all parts of their bodies very curiously and ingeniously traced and pintred (tattooed), and have their teeth filed very sharp. They pull off all the hair from their eyelids. The men have their beards short, black, and cropped, and the hair on their heads strangely cut into crisped paths or cross alleys ; while others wear theirs in strange jagged tufts, or other foolish forms ; the women's heads being all close shaved.

“ Their town contains not more than thirty or forty houses, all irregularly clustered together, all thatched with reeds ; yet each has a kind of yard inclosed with mud walls like our hovels or hog-styes in England. Instead of a locked and bolted door, the entrance is only closed by a mat, having nothing to be stolen ; and for bedsteads they have only a few billets covered by a mat ; yet some have hangings of mats, especially about their beds. Their furniture consists of two or three earthen pots to hold water, and to boil such provisions as they can get ; a gourd or two for palm wine ; half a gourd to serve as a drinking cup ; a few earthen dishes for their loblolly or pottage ; and a basket or two for the Maria to gather cockles ; and a knapsack for the man, made of bark to carry his provisions, with his pipe and tobacco. When a negro man goes from home he has always his knapsack on his back, in which he has his provisions and tobacco, his pipe being seldom from his mouth ; besides which he has always his little sword by his side, made by themselves of such iron as they get from the Europeans,



A NATIVE HUNTER





his bow also, and quiver full of poisoned arrows, pointed with iron like a snake's tongue, or else a case of javelins or darts having iron heads of good breadth and made sharp, sometimes both. The men of this country are large and well-made, strong and courageous, and civilized manners for heathens; as they keep most faithfully to their wives, of whom they are not a little jealous. I could not learn their religion, for though they have some idols, they seem to know that there is a God in heaven, as, when we asked them about their wooden puppets, they used to lift up their hands to heaven. All their children are circumcised, but I could not learn the reason why. They are very just and true in their dealings, and theft is punished with instant death. When any one dies, a small thatched roof is erected over his bier, under which are set earthen pots kept always full of water, and some earthen plates with different kinds of food, a few bones being stuck up around the body. To the South of this bay, some thirty or forty leagues into the interior country, there are very fierce people, who are cannibals, and sometimes infest the natives of Sierra Leone.

“The inhabitants of Sierra Leone feed on rice, of which they only cultivate what is indispensably needful for their subsistence, in small patches near their dwellings, which they clear by burning the woods. They likewise sow another very small grain, called pene, of which they make bread, not much unlike winter savory. They rear a few poultry about their houses, using no other animals for food, except when they sometimes get a fawn of the wild deer, a few of which are found in the mountains, or some wild fowl.

They feed also on cockles and oysters, of which there are vast quantities on the rocks and trees by the seaside, but these have rather an insipid taste; and they catch plenty of excellent fish, by means of weirs and other devices. They also feed on herbs and roots, cultivating about their dwellings many plantains, gourds, pumpkins, potatoes, and Guinea pepper.

“Tobacco likewise is planted by every one, and seems to constitute half their food. The bowl of their tobacco pipe is very large, and made of clay well burnt, into the lower end of which they thrust a small hollow cane eighteen inches long, through which they suck the smoke, both men and women swallowing most of it. Every man carries a small bag called a tuffio in his knapsack, in which is his pipe and tobacco, and the women have their pipes in their hands. They prepare their tobacco for smoking by straining out its juice while quite green, and they informed us by signs that it would otherwise make them drunk. They afterwards shred it very small and dry on an earthen dish over the embers. On an island in the bay we saw about half a dozen goats and nowhere else in this country.

“They have innumerable kinds of fruits growing wild in the woods, in which are whole groves of lemon trees, especially near the town and watering place, and some few orange trees. Their drink is mostly water; yet the men use great quantities of palmito wine, which they call moy, giving little or none to the women. It is strange to see their manner of climbing the palmito trees; which are of great size and height, having neither boughs nor branches except near the top. Surrounding the





PICKING PALM-KERNELS

tree and his own body by means of a withe or band of twisted twigs, on which he leans his back, and jerking up his withe before him, he foots it up with wonderful speed and certainty, and comes down again in the same manner, bringing his gourd full of liquor on his arm. Among their fruits are many kinds of plums: one like a wheaten plum is wholesome and savoury; likewise a black one, as large as a horse plum, which is much esteemed and has an aromatic flavour. A kind called mansamillius, resembling a wheaten plum, is very dangerous, as is likewise the sap of the boughs which is perilous for the sight if it should chance to get into the eyes. Among their fruits is one called beninganion, about the size of a lemon with a reddish rind and very wholesome; also another called bequill, as large as an apple, with a rough knotty skin which is pared off, when the pulp below eats like a strawberry, which likewise it resembles in colour and grain, and of which we eat much. There are abundance of wild grapes in the woods; but having a woody and bitterish taste. The nuts of the palmito are eaten roasted. They use but little pepper and grains. There is a singular fruit growing six or eight together in a bunch, each as long and thick as one's finger, the skin being of a brownish yellow colour and somewhat downy, and within the rind is a pulp of a pleasant taste; but I know not if it be wholesome.

“ I observed in the woods certain trees like beeches, bearing fruit resembling beans, of which I noticed three kinds. One of these was a great tall tree, bearing pods like those of beans, in each of which was four or five squarish beans, resembling tamarind

seeds, having hard shells, within which is a virulent poison, employed by the negroes to envenom their arrows. This they call Ogon. The second is smaller, having a crooked pod with a thick rind ; six or seven inches long, and half that breadth, containing each five large beans an inch long. The third, called quenda, has short leaves like the former, and much bigger fruit, growing on a strong thick woody stock, indented on the sides, nine inches long and five broad, within which are five long beans, which are also said to be dangerous.

“I likewise saw trees resembling willows, bearing fruit like pease pods. There is a fruit called Gola, which grows in the interior. This fruit, which is enclosed in a shell, is hard, reddish, bitter, and about the size of a walnut, with many angles and corners. The negroes are much given to chew this fruit along with the bark of a certain tree. After one person has chewed it a while, he gives it to his neighbour, and so from one to another, chewing long before they cast it away, but swallowing none of its substance. They attribute great virtues to this for the teeth and gums; and indeed the negroes are usually as well toothed as horses. This fruit passes also among them for money.

“Higher within the land they cultivate cotton, which they call innuma, and of which they spin very good yarn with spindles, and afterwards very ingeniously weave into cloths, three quarters of a yard broad, to make their girdles or clouts formerly mentioned ; and when sewed together it is made into jackets and breeches for their great men. By means of a wood called cambe they dye their purses and mats of a red colour.

“The tree on which the plantains grow is of a considerable height, its body being about the thickness of a man’s thigh. It seems to be an annual, and, in my opinion, ought rather to be reckoned among reeds than trees; for the stem is not of a woody substance, but compacted of many leaves wrapped close upon each other, adorned with leaves from the very ground instead of boughs, which are mostly two yards long and a yard broad, having a large rib in the middle. The fruit is a bunch of ten or twelve plantains, each a span long and as thick as a man’s wrist, somewhat crooked or bending inwards. These grow on a leafy stalk on the middle of the plant, being at first green, but grow yellow and tender as they ripen. When the rind is stripped off, the inner pulp is also yellowish and pleasant to the taste. Beneath the fruit hangs down, from the same stalk, a leafy sharp-pointed tuft, which seems to have been the flower. This fruit they call banana, which they have in reasonable abundance. They are ripe in September and October. We carried some with us green to sea which were six weeks in ripening.

“Guinea pepper grows wild in the woods on a small plant like privet, having small slender leaves, the fruit being like our barberry in form and colour. It is green at first, turning red as it ripens. It does not grow in bunches like our barberry, but here and there two or three together about the stalk. They call it bangué.

“The pene of which their bread is made grows on a small tender herb resembling grass, the stalk being all full of small seeds, not inclosed in any



husk. I think it is the same which the Turks call cuscus, and the Portuguese Yfunde.

“The palmito tree is high and straight, the stalk being knotty and the wood of a soft substance, having no boughs except at the top and these also seem rather reeds than boughs, being all pith within inclosed by a hard rind. The leaf is long and slender, like that of a sword-lily or flag. The boughs stand out from the top of the tree on all sides, rather more than a yard long, beset on both sides with strong sharp prickles, like the saw teeth but longer. It bears a fruit like a small cocoa-nut, the size of chestnut inclosed in a hard shell, streaked with threads on the outside, and containing a kernel of a hard horny substance quite tasteless, yet they are eaten roasted. The tree is called tobell and the fruit bell. For procuring the palmito wine they cut off one of the branches within a span of the head, to which they fasten a gourd shell by the mouth, which in twenty-four hours is filled by a clear whitish sap, of a good and strong relish, with which the natives get drunk.

“The oysters formerly mentioned grow on trees resembling willows in form, but having broader leaves, which are thick like leather, and having small knobs like those of the cypress. From these trees hang down many branches into the water, each about the thickness of a walking-stick, smooth, limber, and within, which are overflowed by every tide and hang as thick as they can stick of—oysters, being the only fruit of this tree.

“They have many kinds of ordinary fish, and some of which seemed to us extraordinary, as mullets,

rays, thorn-backs, old-wives with prominent brows, fishes like pikes, gar-fish, cavallios, like makerel, sword-fishes having snouts a yard long toothed on each side like a saw-shark's, dog-fish sharkers, resembling sharks but having a broad flat snout like a shovel, shoemakers, having pendants at each side of their mouths like barbels, and which grunt like hogs, with many others. We once caught in an hour 6,000 fishes like bleaks. Of birds there are pelicans as large as swans, of a white colour, with long and large bills; herons, curlews, boobies, ox-eyes, and various other kinds of water-fowl. On land great numbers of grey parrots, and abundance of pintados or Guinea fowls, which are very hurtful to their rice crops. There are many other kinds of strange birds in the woods, of which I knew not the names; and I saw among the Negroes many porcupine quills. There are also great number of monkeys leaping about the trees, and on the mountains there are lions, tigers and ounces. There are but few elephants, of which we only saw three; but they abound further inland. The negroes told us of a strange beast, which our interpreter called a carbuncle, which is said to be often seen, but only in the night. This animal is said to carry a stone in the forehead, wonderfully luminous, giving him light by which to feed in the night, and on hearing the slightest noise he presently conceals it with a skin or film naturally provided for the purpose. The commodities here are few, more being got farther to the eastwards. At certain times of the year the Portuguese got gold and elephants' teeth in exchange for rice, salt, beads, bells, garlick, French bottles, edge-tooles, iron barrs, and sundry specious trifles,

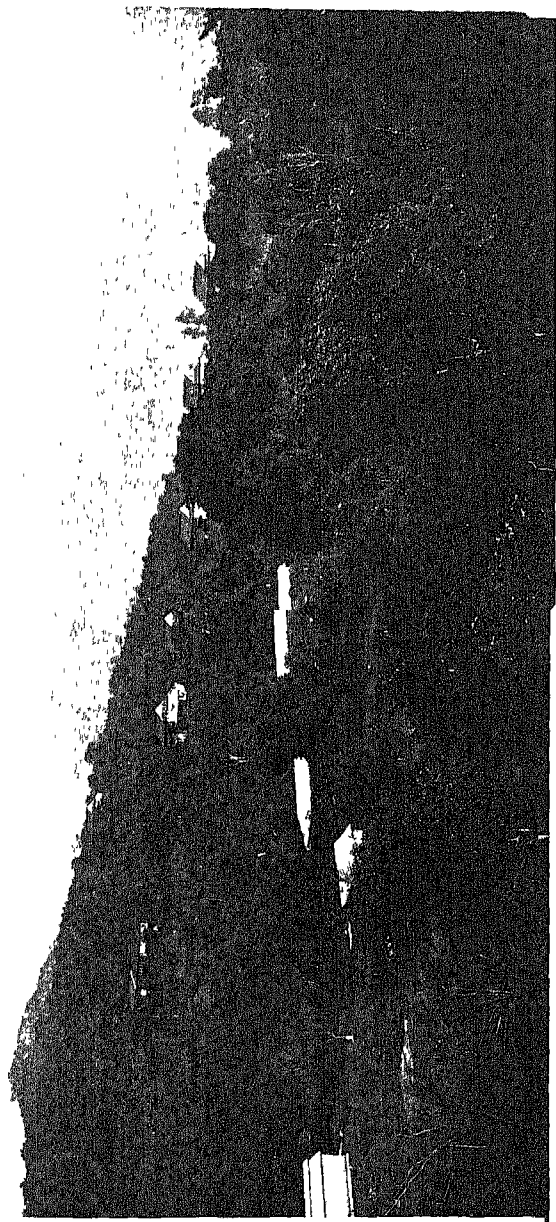
but for your toys they will not give gold in this place but victuals."

In 1615 Sierra Leone was visited by the *Unity*, a ship of 360 tons, of which William Cornelison Schonten was the master. This visit is described as follows:—

"On the 1st August we came in sight of the high land of Sierra Leone, on the 21st of that month, as also of the island of Madre Bomba, which lies off the south point of Sierra Leone and north from the shallows of the island of St. Ann. This land of Sierra Leone is the highest of all that lie between Cape Verd and the coast of Guinea, and is therefore easily known.

"On the 30th August they cast anchor in eight fathoms water on a fine sandy bottom near the shore and opposite a village or town of the negroes in the road of Sierra Leone. This village consisted only of eight or nine poor thatched huts. The moorish inhabitants were willing to come on board to trade, only demanding a pledge to be left on shore for their security, because a French ship had recently carried off two of the natives perfidiously. Aris Clawson, the junior merchant or supercargo, went accordingly on shore, where he drove a small trade for lemons and bananas in exchange for glass beads.

"In the meantime some of the natives came off to the ship, bringing with them an interpreter who spoke many languages. They here very conveniently furnished themselves with fresh water, which poured down in great abundance from a very high hill, so that they had only to place their casks under the waterfall. There were here whole woods of lemon-trees, and lemons were so cheap that they might have had



"THE HIGH LAND OF SIFRA LEONE," WITH HILL STATION IN THE FOREGROUND.



a thousand for a few beads and ten thousand for a few common knives, so that they easily procured as many as they wished, and each man had 150 for sea store. The 3rd September they found a vast shoal of fish resembling a shoemaker's knife. They left Sierra Leone on the 4th September."

The next recorded visit to Sierra Leone was that of the *Desire*, whose Master was Thomas Candesh, and this visit is described as follows:—

"They made Sierra Leone on the 23rd August, and reached its southern side on the 25th, where they had five fathoms of the lowest ebb; having had for about fourteen leagues, while running into this harbour, from eight to sixteen fathoms. At this place they destroyed a negro town because the inhabitants had killed one of their men with a poisoned arrow. Some of the men went four miles up the harbour in a boat on the 3rd September, where they caught plenty of fish, and going on shore procured some lemons. They saw also some buffaloes, on their return to the ship. On the 6th they went out of the harbour of Sierra Leone and staid one tide three leagues from the point at its mouth, the tide there flowing S.W.

"The 7th they departed for one of the islands which lie about ten leagues from the point of Sierra Leone, called the Banana Isle, and anchored that same day off the principal isle, on which they only found a few plantains."

In 1622 a Dutch fleet consisting of eleven vessels put into the harbour of Sierra Leone, where they stayed for about three weeks. The visit is described as follows:—

“ They anchored in the road of Sierra Leone on the 11th August. Here on the 15th some of the crew being on shore ate freely of certain nuts resembling nutmegs, which had a fine taste, but had scarcely got on board when one of them dropt down dead, and before he was thoroughly cold he was all over purple spots. The rest recovered by taking proper medicines. Sierra Leone is a mountain on the Continent of Africa standing on the South side of the mouth of the river Mitomba, which discharges itself into a great bay of the sea. The road in which ships usually anchor is in Lat. of  $8^{\circ} 26' N$ . This mountain is very high and thickly covered with trees, by which it may be easily known, as there is no mountain of such height anywhere upon the coast. There grows here a prodigious number of trees producing a small kind of lemons called limasses (limes), resembling those of Spain in shape and taste, and which are very agreeable and wholesome if not eaten to excess. The fleet arrived here at the season when this fruit was in perfection, and having full leave from the natives the people eat them intemperately, by which and the bad air the bloody flux increased much among them, so that they lost forty men between the 11th August and the 5th September.

“ Sierra Leone abounds in palm trees, and has some Ananas or Pine-apples with plenty of wood of all sorts, besides having anchorage. They sailed from Sierra Leone on the 4th September, on which day the Admiral fell sick.”

In 1730 the Merchants of Havre and Nantz sent out some armed merchant vessels with the alleged object of exterminating the pirates in Pirates' Bay,

Sierra Leone; history is silent as to the result of this expedition. They visited the Colony of Gambia and destroyed some trading centres owned by Englishmen.

By an Act of Parliament of 1763, 4 George III, Chapter 20, Senegal and its Dependencies became vested in a Company which is described as the Company of Merchants Trading in Africa, and by an Act of the following year the property of the Company became vested in His Majesty King George the Third, and the trade to Africa was declared open to all his subjects, the officers and servants on the Coast being forbidden to export negroes on their own account.

The Peninsula of Sierra Leone was purchased in 1787, and a number of freed slaves and about sixty white women arrived from England the same year. The Sierra Leone Company, which had been formed for philanthropic purposes, was established by Act of Parliament, 31 George III, Chapter 55, of the 1st July, 1791, for a period of thirty-one years, and annulled on the petition of the Company by an Act transferring to His Majesty certain possessions and rights vested in the Company, and for shortening the duration of the said Company and for preventing any dealing or trafficking in buying or selling slaves within the Colony of Sierra Leone on the 8th August, 1807. The Colony was formally transferred to Governor Ledlum for the Crown on the 31st January, 1808. Apart from anything else, Sierra Leone, on account of its very close association with the abolition of the slave trade and the efforts made to promote civilization in West Africa and to convert the natives



to Christianity, will always appeal to the sentiment of a large section of the English public.

It was the famous ruling of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield in 1772 that a slave setting foot in England became free, which inspired William Cowper's stirring lines :—

“Slaves cannot breathe in England : if their lungs  
Receive our air, that moment they are free ,  
They touch our country and their shackles fall.”

“Freedom has a thousand charms to show  
That slaves, howe'er contented, never know.”

Although the slave trade was abolished over a century ago, slavery still exists in many parts of West Africa, and it was in a great measure due to the raids by the Sofas and intertribal wars for the purpose of obtaining slaves that a Protectorate was in 1896 declared over the territory adjacent to the Colony of Sierra Leone. Domestic slavery still exists, but it is a kind, patriarchal sort of slavery, and slaves are allowed to purchase their freedom by paying, in the case of an adult, a sum not exceeding £4, and in the case of a child a sum not exceeding £2 ; many of them prefer to remain as domestic slaves or retainers, or, as they describe it, “sit down to some person” who makes himself responsible for their welfare. Their position is somewhat similar to that of the serf under the old English feudal system.

All dealing in slaves has been made unlawful, and heavy penalties are provided for any breach of this provision, whilst every slave or other person who shall be brought or induced to come within the limits of

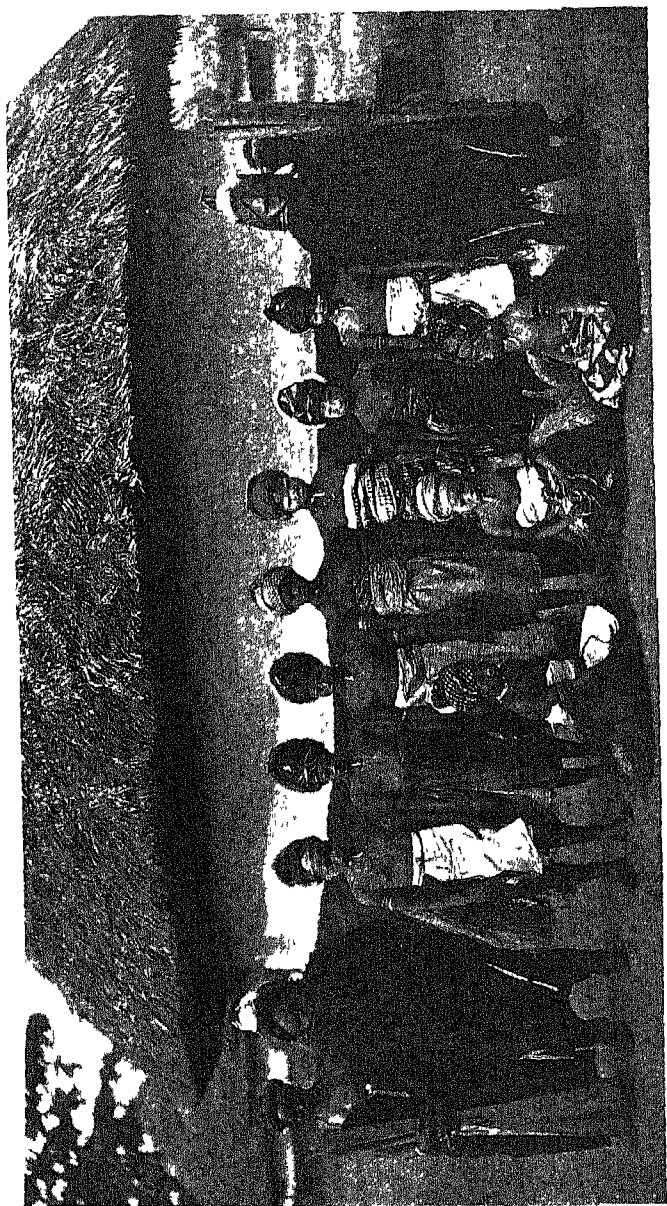
the Protectorate in order that such person shall be dealt or traded in, sold, purchased or transferred as a pledge or security for debt, is declared to be free. The principles underlying the administration of the Protectorate have been to recognize as between natives the use of native customs and laws, and to preserve the authority of the native rulers while preventing any acts of aggression on their part.

The Protectorate Courts Jurisdiction Ordinance, 1903, provides that in the Court of the District Commissioners or the Circuit Court judicial cognizance may be taken of any law or custom not being repugnant to natural justice. Courts of Native Chiefs are also recognized by the above Ordinance, and such Courts are declared to have jurisdiction according to native law and custom to hear and determine all civil cases arising exclusively between natives, other than a case involving a question of title to land between two or more Paramount Chiefs, and all criminal cases arising exclusively between natives, other than Murder, Slave-raiding, Cannibalism, and a few other of the more serious offences, provided that the Chief shall in no case be permitted to inflict punishment involving death, mutilation, or grievous bodily harm; formerly it was the custom to hand over the wrong-doer to the injured party, who could take his life or keep him as a slave until such time as he or his family paid a sufficient sum to have him redeemed.

The administration by the native rulers is kept under close observation, and they are encouraged to educate themselves in the application of their own code. Each chief has his advisers or counsellors,

some of whom are selected by himself and others elected by the people. When a chief dies it is not customary to announce the fact at once—his chief speaker would announce first that he was suffering from a bad sickness, and was therefore unable to attend the affairs of State, later he would announce that he had gone to Futah—Futah Jalloh being in the eyes of the natives a land rich in cattle and everything that they most desire. Steps would then be taken to elect a new chief. The person usually selected would be the senior male member of the deceased's family, though they sometimes go to the female side, as there is no Salic law to prevent such a course. The person nominated is taken to a hut on the outskirts of the town near the burial-place of the chief, where he lives out of sight of all persons for two or three months; during this period he is supposed to hold high converse with the mighty dead, and learn from them how to govern wisely and well. After the lapse of this period the principal men of the chieftom visit him, and he is escorted into the town, which gives itself up to wild enthusiasm. The chief elect is carried round the town by a struggling, shouting mob, and at this stage it is permissible for any one to strike him. The reason given for this ceremony is that it enables the chief to feel the pain he will have in his power to inflict on others, and in consequence it may teach him compassion. After the chief has been formally elected and acclaimed, his body is sacred. Among the Mendes, women are frequently elected to the chieftainship; a chieftainess does not marry, but may have a consort, whom she changes at will. She is also permitted, contrary





BUNDU GIRLS AND BUNDU DEVILS.

to a strict rule regarding other women, to join the Poro Society. The Bundu Society, a women's society which corresponds with the Poro for men, plays a very important part in native life among the Mendes and Temnes. Bundu girls have to undergo during their novitiate period an operation somewhat similar to that performed on the Poro boys, and their backs and loins are cut in such a manner as to leave raised scars which project above the surface of the skin. They also receive their Bundu names by which they are afterwards known. Their release from the Bundu bush is carried out with great ceremony, and they are usually accompanied by persons wearing hideous masks who personate Bundu devils. A procession is formed, which marches through the town or village accompanied by musicians, who play on a collection of instruments consisting of drums, rattles and timbrels. A halt is made in the centre of the town and the girls are publicly pronounced marriageable.

The price paid for a wife varies according to the social position of the parties, but the usual price is between £3 and £5, though a man who has married a shrew will often sell her second-hand for a few shillings.

The majority of the people of the Protectorate are Pagans, but Mohammedanism is rapidly spreading among them; and as no good Mohammedan ever touches spirits, the advance of this faith may go a long way to put a stop to the consumption of trade gin, which is the curse of the Coast. The Government is doing everything possible to discourage its use as currency, and the principle of local option has been encouraged with good effect. One large District and

portions of two other Districts have been declared prohibited areas into which no spirits can be lawfully imported.

One other matter which the Local Government is doing that is likely to result in much good is the effort being made to instruct the native chiefs and their people in sanitation and to teach them an elementary knowledge of hygiene.

The Colony and Protectorate of Sierra Leone at the present time comprise an area of approximately 30,000 square miles, and the population, given at the census taken in 1911, is 1,400,000. The Colony has an area of only 256 square miles and a population of 75,000, of which about 600 are Europeans; it is of course the Colony that has so often been referred to in song and story on account of the evil reputation of its climate; it is a case of "give a dog a bad name and it sticks to him."

Sierra Leone was and is still known, though now quite undeservedly, as the White Man's Grave. Mrs. Falconbridge, the wife of one of the early agents of the Sierra Leone Company, records that during her residence in the Colony (1793-4) it was usual to ask in the morning "how many died last night." This can still be heard in Freetown as a form of morning greeting, but it now helps to start the day with a laugh, and that in West Africa is about the best tonic known.

Captain Chamiers, in his "Life of a Sailor," says: "I have travelled east, I have travelled west, north and south, ascended mountains, dived in mines, but I never knew and never heard mention of so villainous and iniquitous a place as Sierra Leone. I know not

where the Devil's Poste Restante is, but the place must surely be Sierra Leone."

Burton, in commenting on the above on the occasion of a visit paid to Freetown, the capital of the Colony, prior to writing his interesting book "Wanderings in West Africa," says in justice to the place, "Here, as elsewhere, the saying may hold good that a certain person may, perhaps, not be so black as he is painted."

The educated Sierra Leonean is proud of the fact that the great Milton in "Paradise Lost" referred to Sierra Leone, even though it was only in connection with the awe-inspiring tornado to which the Colony is frequently subject, in those lines :

"With adverse blast upturns them from the South  
 . . . black with thund'rous clouds from Sierra Leone."

Sierra Leone as it exists to-day is, owing to segregation and up-to-date sanitation, comparatively healthy for Europeans. The progress of the Colony has been phenomenal during the last fifteen years, and the credit is chiefly due to two energetic and far-seeing Governors in the persons of Sir Frederick Cardew and Sir Leslie Probyn, who foresaw the great benefit that would accrue by opening up the Protectorate, and this has been done by building lines of railway into the rich palm-kernel belts and encouraging the natives to gather the natural products of the country for export.

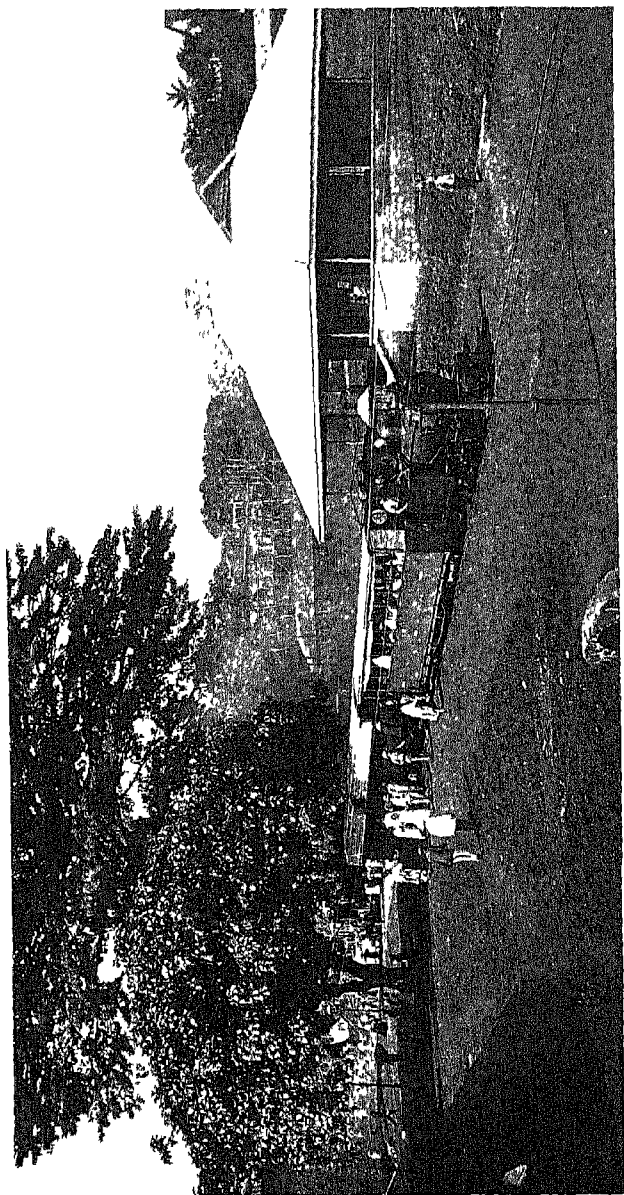
The revenue of the Colony, which in 1898 was only £117,000, had increased to £618,000 in 1913, and although the expenditure has proportionately increased, the finances of the Colony may be looked upon as satisfactory.



Freetown, the chief port and the seat of the Government, is a city with a population of about 35,000 inhabitants, of which about two-thirds belong to a class known as Creoles, the majority of whom are the descendants of the liberated slaves. It is beautifully situated, at the foot of a circle of hills on the summits of which are barracks belonging to the Garrison Artillery, the West India and the West African Regiment; and a short distance beyond lies Hill Station, the residence of the majority of the European officials stationed in the Colony—Sugar Loaf, a beautiful wooded mountain which rises to a height of nearly 3,000 feet, forming a picturesque background. Altogether the natural beauties of Freetown and its surroundings are many, though it is frequently asserted by the jaded or bored temporary resident, that to enjoy the view really one must see it from the stern of one of Messrs. Elder, Dempster's ships homeward bound.

In regard to the temporary resident—which every European must consider himself, as, even with the greatest progress possible, Sierra Leone can never be regarded as other than a black man's country—a discussion recently took place at a meeting of the members of the Hill Station Sports Club on the interpretation of the words "permanent residents" and "ordinary members" of the Club. One member humorously moved the deletion of the words "permanent" and "ordinary," assigning as his reason that the only European "permanent" members were those in the cemetery, and that there was a misuse of the word "ordinary" as no one who was ordinary ever came to West Africa; needless to say the pro-





COTTON TREE STATION, 9 A M BUNGALOW TRAIN, FREETOWN

posal was carried *nem. con.* The European officials and officers of the garrison are well provided for in the way of means of recreation. There are numerous tennis courts, a golf link, stickie and squash courts, and a cricket ground—and there is no doubt that the fact of being able to take healthy and pleasant exercise reacts favourably on the health generally of the white community. Hill Station is situated nearly 1,000 feet above sea level and in the midst of most beautiful surroundings, and here the European official can enjoy the refreshing breezes from the broad Atlantic after leaving his office and the used-up atmosphere of Freetown. The Station is connected by a line of rails six miles in length with Freetown. The train is naturally not a “flying Scotchman,” and some years ago the Railway Department were practising economy by feeding their engines with firewood instead of coal; however, the train service at present is as good as can be expected, and there are a sufficient number of trains to meet the requirements of residents.

Hill Station is fortunate in having an excellent water supply laid on to all the bungalows, which are roomy and comfortable; and, all things considered, the Colonial Official's lot in Sierra Leone is not an unhappy one.

In the streets of Freetown there are natives of many races to be seen. Chief among them are the Mendes and Temnes, but there are also many Mandingos, Susus and Limbahs. The market women of Freetown, chiefly Creole, are also one of the features of the place. They are keen business women, and look upon it almost as a matter of honour to haggle

over the smallest commercial transaction. There are of course many Creole traders who have shops of their own, where anything from a bag of sand to a pearl necklace can be purchased, but the chief trade is in the hands of European firms. The educated Creole youth usually looks for employment as a clerk, and when once he has attained that object he makes little further effort to improve his position.

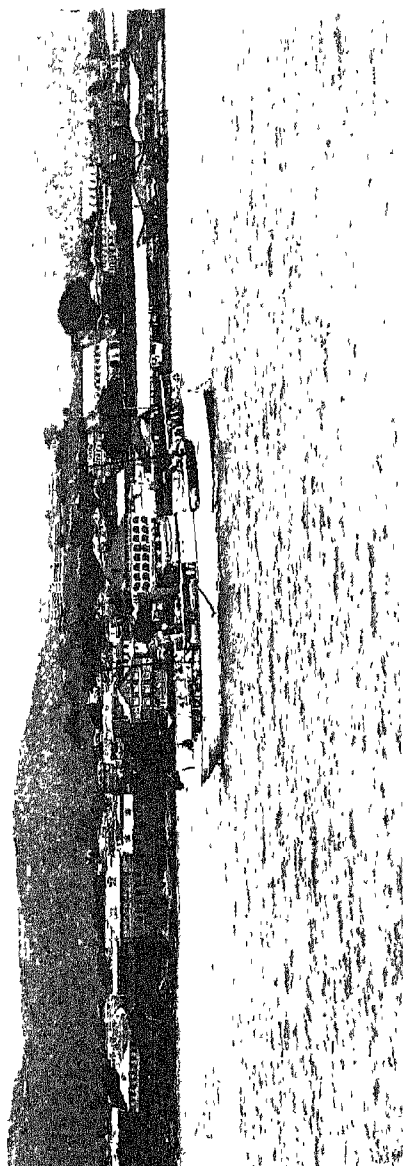
According to the last census the Creole population shows a decrease of over 6 per cent. during the ten years under review, while the other native races in the Colony show a considerable natural increase. The ordinary Creole has always shown a marked antipathy to agriculture, and the principle here applies that when a nationality declines to cultivate the earth, the first industry of life, that nationality has a tendency to decrease.

Mission enterprise has not been a success in West Africa, and this is probably due to the fact that the first stage in converting the pagan is the effort made to break down his superstitious beliefs in good and evil spirits, which are matters of the gravest importance in his social life.

Witches and vampires are still in fashion among them, and belong to the good old-fashioned variety which come to your bedroom in the dead of night, sit on your chest and suck your blood. It is not unusual to hear even the more or less educated native complain that he has passed a most unpleasant night because "witches" have visited him.

It is certainly no compliment to call a lady in this country a witch; she is liable to be maltreated and even beaten to death, and it is not uncommon for the





FREETOWN FROM THE HARBOUR.

police to be asked to protect a Freetown lady who is suspected of being a witch.

It would appear from the criminal statistics that Freetown has a demoralizing effect on the aboriginal native who comes from the Protectorate to trade or obtain employment, and this is probably due to the fact that he is free from tribal authority and that his superstitious belief does not present any obstacle to his helping himself to the white man's property.

There is very little stigma attached to imprisonment, which, after all, is the chief deterring factor in civilized countries; it does not necessarily follow that a scale of punishments suitable for offences committed by a civilized people is suitable for offences committed by an uncivilized people, and there are strong arguments in favour of allowing corporal punishment to be inflicted as well as imprisonment for offences committed by uneducated natives. Imprisonment to the educated native is of course a real punishment, though the social consequence following it would not be as serious as in the case of a European.

Commercially the importance of Sierra Leone is small as compared with its easterly neighbours, the Gold Coast Colony with its hinterland Dependencies of Ashanti and the Northern Territories, and the huge new Colony of Nigeria made up of three older Colonies, but of all our West African Colonies Sierra Leone is probably the best known to the British public, and with the fine harbour and important coaling station at Freetown, its capital, Sierra Leone is a valuable link in the great chain of Imperial communication.





## APPENDIX

### DESPATCH FROM THE GOVERNOR OF SIERRA LEONE REPORTING ON THE MEASURES ADOPTED TO DEAL WITH UNLAWFUL SOCIETIES IN THE PROTECTORATE

THE GOVERNOR TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

(Received 21 July, 1913.)

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SIERRA LEONE,  
9th July, 1913.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to transmit, for your information, a report on the steps taken to deal with unlawful societies in the Protectorate.

I have, &c.,

E. M. MEREWETHER,  
Governor.

Enclosure.

#### REPORT ON THE MEASURES ADOPTED TO DEAL WITH UNLAWFUL SOCIETIES IN THE SIERRA LEONE PRO- TECTORATE.

For a number of years past the Northern Sherbro district has been the principal field for the operations of an organization which goes under the name of the Human Leopard Society. It has not yet been decided whether the object of the Society is merely to satisfy the craving which some savages have for human flesh, or whether the eating of human flesh is only part of some ceremony which is believed to have the effect of increasing the mental and physical powers of the members of the

Society Whatever the object is, the result is a very powerful and widespread secret organization, to which most, if not all, of the principal men of certain districts belong

2. Several cases of murder committed by this Society have at various times come before the Circuit Court, and convictions have been obtained, but the full extent of the Society's operations was not brought to light until last year, when the District Commissioner received information that from 20 to 30 murders had been committed since the year 1907, the Imperri sub-district and the country round Pujehun being the principal centres of the trouble.

3. The District Commissioner reported the matter to the Government at the end of July, and proceeded to arrest the persons who appeared to be implicated. By the middle of October 336 persons had been arrested, including several Paramount Chiefs and leading men from the different chiefdoms. A company and a half of the West African Frontier Force were sent down to the Northern Sherbro District to preserve order and assist in guarding the prisoners.

4. The only direct evidence against the persons arrested was found in the statements of certain of their number who turned King's evidence. These men admitted that they themselves were members of the Human Leopard Society, and described what had taken place at the various murders in which they had taken part.

5. In many cases there was no corroborative evidence, and all attempts to obtain such evidence proved fruitless, a very strong oath of secrecy having clearly been imposed on all the people. Even the relatives of the victims, who were in most cases young boys and girls, were afraid to give information.

6. It soon became clear that, although the District Commissioner and his assistants relied on being able to prove a special mark indicating membership of the

Society, there was not sufficient evidence against many of the persons arrested to justify their being committed for trial. Accordingly, in order to assist the District Commissioner, who was overwhelmed with work, the Solicitor-General was sent to the Northern Sherbro District with instructions to go into the cases with him and ascertain in how many there was a sufficiently strong *prima facie* case against the accused.

7. The result of the Solicitor-General's enquiry was : out of 336 persons who were detained in custody at Pujehun and Gbangbama, 42 were committed for trial, three turned King's evidence, and 291 were discharged after the preliminary enquiry had been held. Later on, 66 other persons were arrested, all of whom were committed for trial on various charges. The total number committed was, therefore, 108.

8. The state of things disclosed by the reports of the District Commissioner was so serious, and the pernicious influence of the Human Leopard Society appeared to be so widely spread, that it was considered necessary, in order to deal adequately with the situation, to give the Government special powers. The Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Ordinance of 1909 was accordingly amended in the following particulars :—

- (a) The two Societies were declared to be unlawful societies.
- (b) Power was given to the Governor to proclaim any chiefdom in which a murder had been committed in connection with an unlawful society, and to the District Commissioner to arrest and detain any person in a proclaimed chiefdom on a warrant under his hand.
- (c) It was made an offence to be a member of an unlawful society, or to take part in the operations of any such society or of any meeting of an unlawful society. The effect of this provision was made retrospective.

(d) Powers of search were given to the police in the Colony, and to court messengers and the West African Frontier Force in the Protectorate.

(e) Power was given to the Governor-in-Council to order the expulsion of any alien convicted under the Ordinance and sentenced to imprisonment on the expiration of his term of imprisonment. A copy of the amending Ordinance (No. 17 of 1912) is attached.

9. It was further considered necessary to appoint a special tribunal to deal with offences committed by members of unlawful societies, for the following reasons :—

(1) The number of cases to be heard and the number of persons committed for trial was so large that it would have been impossible for the Judge of the Circuit Court to hear them without seriously interfering with the ordinary criminal and civil work of the Court.

(2) In the Circuit Court, native chiefs sit with the Judge as assessors, and as it appeared from the reports of the District Commissioner that many of the Paramount Chiefs in his District were implicated in the crimes of the Human Leopard Society, there was a danger of the Assessors being in sympathy with the persons whom they would be called upon to try.

10 An Ordinance was accordingly passed empowering the Governor to appoint a Court or Courts of Special Commissioners for the trial of persons charged with offences committed in connection with unlawful societies, whether before or after the commencement of the Ordinance, and defining the powers and jurisdiction of the Court. A copy of the Ordinance (No. 18 of 1912) is attached, together with a copy of Ordinance No. 21 of 1912, by which certain amendments in matters of detail were made.

11. Under Section 2 (2) a Special Commission Court

consists of three persons, one of whom must be a judge or barrister or solicitor of the Supreme Court of the Colony or of any other Court in the British dominions, and one of the members is appointed to be President of the Court. By Section 10 the powers conferred by Sections 5 and 6 of the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Amendment Ordinance, 1912, and various other powers conferred by the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Ordinance of 1909 are extended to persons convicted by a Special Commission Court.

12. It was recognized that, in view of the terror inspired by the Society and the oath of secrecy which was believed to have been imposed on the people of the District, there would be great difficulty in obtaining evidence ; and that persons of whose connection with the Society there was no moral doubt whatever might be acquitted for want of sufficient evidence to satisfy legal requirements. Section 11 of the Ordinance accordingly provides that in any such case, if the Court is of opinion, after hearing all the evidence, that it is expedient for the security, peace or order of the District that the accused person should be expelled from the District, the Court may, notwithstanding his acquittal, send to the Governor a report of the case, and thereupon the accused may be expelled from the Colony and Protectorate.

13. The importance of having an officer of high legal attainments, and one who had had previous experience of West Africa, as President of the Court was obvious, and the Government was fortunate in being able to secure the services of Sir William Brandford Griffith, late Chief Justice of the Gold Coast. The other members of the Court, as it was at first constituted, were Mr. A. Van der Meulen, Solicitor-General, and Mr. K. J. Beatty, Police Magistrate, both of whom are barristers-at-law. Later on, Mr. Van der Meulen went on leave, and his place was taken by Lieutenant-Colonel H. G. Warren, District Commissioner of the Karene District.

14. The Court commenced its sittings on the 16th December. Owing to the large number of prisoners and witnesses, all of whom resided in the Northern Shorbro District, it was decided that the Court should sit at Gbangbama, in the Imperri chiefdom. The Crown was represented by Mr. E. D. Vergette, Crown Prosecutor, assisted by Major R. H. K. Willans, Acting District Commissioner, and Mr. C. S. H. Vaudrey, Assistant District Commissioner. The prisoners were all represented by counsel.

15. The trials were conducted with the utmost care and patience. The hearing of the first case occupied 11 days, of the second 36 days, and of the third 28 days. The other cases were disposed of more rapidly.

16. In the third case the question of the initiation mark alleged to be borne by members of the Human Leopard Society was very carefully gone into. The accomplices showed the mark on their own persons, and described how it was made. They also pointed out marks on the prisoners which they alleged to be the mark of the Society. Unfortunately, their evidence in some instances was contradictory, and they identified different marks on the same person as being the initiation mark. Moreover, it was proved, by taking persons haphazard in the Court who were not suspected of any connection with the Society, that it was hardly possible to distinguish the alleged Human Leopard mark from scars caused by disease or slight injuries. The Court was, therefore, unable to accept the mark as evidence of membership of the Society.

17. In view of this ruling, it was obviously useless to proceed with cases in which the alleged mark formed the only corroboration of the evidence of accomplices, and it was decided to enter a *nolle prosequi* in such cases.

18. Out of 108 persons committed by the District Commissioner, 34 were brought to trial, 71 were released after a *nolle prosequi* had been entered, and three died before trial. Of the persons brought to trial, nine were convicted







VIEW FROM GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FREETOWN

of murder and 10 others of lesser offences, the remaining 15 being acquitted. Seven of the nine men convicted of murder were executed, and in the case of the other two the capital sentence was commuted for one of imprisonment for life. Of the 15 persons who were acquitted 11 have since been expelled from the Colony and Protectorate on the recommendation of the Court; and by arrangement with the Government of Southern Nigeria those who have been sentenced to imprisonment will be transferred to Lagos to undergo their sentences there.

\* \* \* \*

19. While it is permissible to believe that the action taken by the Government has had the effect of checking the activities of the Human Leopard Society, at all events for the time being, it would be by no means prudent to assert that this criminal organization has been broken up. Many persons of whose connection with the Society there is little or no doubt are still at large, and probably there are not a few others who have hitherto not come under the notice of the authorities.

20. The blind belief of the natives in the efficacy of the "medicines" concocted by the Society (especially that known as "Borfima"); the power and authority enjoyed by the possessors of these medicines; the fact that periodical human sacrifices are considered to be necessary in order to renew the efficacy of the medicines; and a tendency on the part of some natives to cannibalism pure and simple—all these causes will contribute to the survival of this baneful organization. It has held sway for many years—possibly for centuries—and the task of stamping it out will undoubtedly be one of great difficulty.

E. M. MEREWETHER,  
Governor.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
FREETOWN,  
9th July, 1913.

Title. AN ORDINANCE to amend the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Ordinance, 1909

No. 17 OF 1912

Enacting Clause. Be it enacted by the Governor of the Colony of Sierra Leone, with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council thereof, as follows:—

Short Title. 1. This Ordinance may be cited as the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Amendment Ordinance, 1912.

Proclamation of districts. 2.—(1) Whenever it appears to the Governor that a murder has been committed in connection with an unlawful society in any chiefdom, it shall be lawful for him by proclamation to declare such chiefdom or any part thereof to be a proclaimed district

(2) In a proclaimed district it shall be lawful for a District Commissioner to order the arrest and detention in custody of any person whose arrest and detention he may consider desirable in the interests of justice. A warrant under the hand of a District Commissioner shall be sufficient authority to the person named therein to detain any such person in such place as shall be mentioned therein.

No. 28 of 1909. 3. For the words “the /any Human Leopard Society and /or Alligator Society” wherever they occur in the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Ordinance, 1909 (hereinafter called the Principal Ordinance), shall be substituted the words “any unlawful society.”

Unlawful societies.

4.—(1) Every person who knowingly—

(a) is or has before the commencement of this Ordinance been a member of an unlawful society; or

(b) takes or has before the commencement of this Ordinance taken part in the operations of an unlawful society or of any meeting thereof,

shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding fourteen years.

(2) A Magistrate or District Commissioner on sworn information may authorize any member of the Sierra Leone Police Force or West African Frontier Force or a court messenger to search any person whom there is good reason to suspect of being a member of an unlawful society or of having taken part in the operations of an unlawful society, or of any meeting thereof, and for this purpose may authorize any of the afore-mentioned persons to enter any premises at any time and, if need be, by force, on Sundays as well as on other days; and if any person wilfully hinders, molests or obstructs any of the aforesaid persons in searching such suspected person, every such person shall be liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds or to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding twelve months.

5. For Section 12 of the Principal Ordinance shall be substituted the following section :—

12. When any person shall have been convicted of complicity in any murder committed in connection with an unlawful society, whether before or after the commencement of this Ordinance, and the Governor shall have decided to grant a pardon to such person on condition of his undergoing a term of imprisonment with or without hard labour, or when any person shall have been convicted of complicity in any murder aforesaid not involving the punishment of death, or when any person shall have been convicted of an offence under this Ordinance or any Ordinance amending the same, and shall have been sentenced by the Court to undergo a term of imprisonment with or without hard labour, the judge before whom such person was so tried and convicted shall forthwith send a report of such case to the Governor, and it shall then be lawful for the Governor-in-Council to direct that such person, not being an alien, shall be deported from the Colony or Protec-

Power of  
Governor-  
in-Council  
to order  
deporta-  
tion.

torate to any other British Colony, there to serve such term of imprisonment in such prison as the Governor of such Colony may direct.

Expulsion  
of aliens.

6—(1) In the case of a convicted person, who is an alien, it shall be lawful for the Governor-in-Council, after the completion of the term of imprisonment awarded to such convicted person, to make an order (in this Ordinance referred to as an expulsion order) requiring such alien to leave the Colony or Protectorate within a time fixed by the order and thereafter to remain out of the Colony and Protectorate.

(2) If any alien in whose case an expulsion order has been made is at any time found within the Colony or Protectorate in contravention of the order, he shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding ten years.

(3) Any person aiding or attempting to aid any person, in whose case an expulsion order has been made, to return to the Colony or Protectorate, and any person harbouring such person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding two years.

7. The schedule to the Principal Ordinance is hereby amended by adding at the end thereof the following words :—

(6) A dress made of baboon skins commonly used by members of an unlawful society.

(7) A “kukoi” or whistle, commonly used for calling together the members of an unlawful society.

(8) An iron needle, commonly used for branding members of an unlawful society.

Interpre-  
tation of  
terms.

8. In this Ordinance “unlawful society” means the Human Leopard Society, the Human Alligator Society, or any other society existing for the purpose of committing or encouraging or procuring the commission of murder.

“Alien” means a person who is a natural-born subject

or citizen of a foreign state, or has been naturalized as such.

9. Whereas various murders are alleged to have been committed in connection with unlawful societies, and various persons have been arrested and detained in custody in connection therewith ; Indemnity clause.

Now it is hereby enacted that all persons who were before the commencement of this Ordinance concerned in the arrest or detention in custody of such arrested persons are hereby fully indemnified for anything done by them in the arrest or detention in custody of such arrested persons, and no action at law or otherwise shall be maintained for such arrested persons having been so arrested and detained in custody, and no writ of *habeas corpus* shall be issued on their behalf.

10. This Ordinance shall apply to the Colony and Protectorate. Extent of Ordinance.

Passed in the Legislative Council this Thirty-first day of October, in the year of our Lord One thousand nine hundred and twelve.

F. A. MILLER,

Clerk of Legislative Council.

AN ORDINANCE to constitute Special Commission Courts Title.  
for the trial of persons charged with offences committed in connection with unlawful societies.

No. 18 of 1912

Whereas there exist in the Colony and Protectorate certain unlawful societies formed for the purpose of committing murders ; Preamble.

And whereas many murders have recently been committed under the influence of such unlawful societies ;

And whereas, owing to the number of these murders, it is expedient to try all persons charged with offences committed in connection with such unlawful societies by a special tribunal ;

Enacting  
Clause.

Be it therefore enacted by the Governor of the Colony of Sierra Leone, with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council thereof, as follows :—

Short  
Title.

1. This Ordinance may be cited as the Special Commission Ordinance, 1912.

Special  
Com-  
mission  
Court.

2.—(1) The Governor may from time to time direct a commission or commissions to be issued for the appointment of a Court or Courts of Special Commissioners for the trial in manner provided by this Ordinance of persons, committed for trial before the Supreme Court of the Colony or the Circuit Court of the Protectorate, for any of the following offences committed in the Colony or Protectorate, whether before or after the commencement of this Ordinance ; that is to say,

- (a) murder, committed in connection with an unlawful society ;
- (b) attempting or conspiring to commit murder in connection with an unlawful society ;
- (c) any of the offences under Section 2 of the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Ordinance, 1909, or under any Ordinance amending that Ordinance ;

No. 28 of  
1909.

and the Governor may by warrant assign to any such Court of Special Commissioners (in this Ordinance referred to as a Special Commission Court) the duty of sitting at the place named in the warrant, and of there, without a jury and not assisted by any native chief, or non-native or native assessors, hearing and determining, according to law, the charge made against the person so committed for trial and named in the warrant, and of doing therein what to justice appertains.

(2) A Special Commission Court shall consist of three persons to be named in such commission, of whom one shall be a judge or barrister or solicitor of the Supreme Court of the Colony or of any other Court in the British dominions, and they shall try in open court, according to the tenor of a warrant under this Ordinance, all persons

named in the warrant who may be brought before them for trial. The Governor shall appoint one of the members of a Special Commission Court to be the President thereof.

(3) A member of a Special Commission Court shall <sup>No. 1 of</sup> take such oaths as are prescribed by the Promissory Oaths <sup>1870.</sup> Ordinance of 1870, to be taken by Judges.

(4) The evidence taken on a trial before a Special Commission Court and the reasons, if any, given by the members of the said Court in delivering judgment, shall be taken down in writing by the President of the said Court.

(5) A person tried by a Special Commission Court shall be acquitted unless the whole Court concur in his conviction, and the members of the said Court shall in all cases of conviction give in open court the reasons for such conviction.

(6) The Governor shall from time to time provide for the payment of the reasonable expenses of witnesses.

3.—(1) There shall be attached to a Special Commission Court an Assistant Master, who shall attend such Special Commission Court, when sitting to try persons charged with offences under this Ordinance. Such Assistant Master, while discharging or performing the duties of his office, shall have all the powers of the Master of the Supreme Court of the Colony. <sup>Appointment of Assistant Master.</sup>

(2) If at any time the Assistant Master shall be prevented by illness or other unavoidable absence from acting in his office, it shall be lawful for the Court to appoint from time to time a deputy to act for the said Assistant Master and to remove such deputy at its pleasure, and such deputy, while acting under such appointment, shall have the like powers as if he were the Assistant Master.

4.—(1) A warrant for the trial by a Special Commission Court of a person charged with an offence shall be in the form contained in the Schedule to this Ordinance. <sup>Regulations as to warrants and notice of trial.</sup>

(2) Not less than seven days before the sitting of any



Special Commission Court, notice thereof shall be published in the *Gazette* stating the names of the Special Commissioners, the place at which the Court will sit, and the day on which the sitting of the Court will begin.

(3) An objection to the jurisdiction of a Special Commission Court to try a person for any offence shall not be entertained by reason only of any non-observance of the provisions of this section; but the Court, on application, may adjourn the case, so as to prevent any person charged being prejudiced by such non-observance.

Regulations as to  
courts.

5.—(1) If any member of a Special Commission Court dies, or if it appears to the Governor that from illness or some reasonable cause it is necessary that another person should be appointed in the place of a member of a Special Commission Court, the Governor may, if he thinks it expedient so to do, direct a supplemental commission to be issued, appointing another person to fill the vacancy in such Court.

(2) Subject to the provisions of this Ordinance, and for the purpose of the trial of any persons charged before them, a Special Commission Court shall have the same privileges, powers and jurisdiction as if it were the Circuit Court of the Protectorate, trying with native chiefs, or non-native or native assessors an offender before such Court, and shall follow, as far as possible, the practice and procedure of that Court, and in hearing and determining the cases of all persons tried before a Special Commission Court, such Court shall, as far as possible, be guided in arriving at a decision by the laws in force in the Colony. A Special Commission Court shall be a court of record, and the same intendment shall be made in respect of all orders, writs, and process made by and issuing out of such Special Commission Court, as if it were a court of record acting according to the course and by the authority of the common law.

(3) All the members of a Special Commission Court shall be present at the hearing and determination of the case

of a person tried before such Court, but, save as aforesaid, the jurisdiction of the Court may be exercised by any of such members, and any act of the Court shall not be invalidated by reason of any vacancy among the members.

(4) The trial by a Special Commission Court of a person in pursuance of a warrant under this Ordinance shall begin as soon as may be, but it shall be lawful for the Court to postpone such trial on the request of such person, or on account of the illness or absence of a witness, or on account of a vacancy in the Court, or of the illness of such person, or some other sufficient cause, and to discontinue a trial of a person, when commenced, on account of a vacancy in the Court or the illness of such person, or some other sufficient cause.

(5) Where a trial of a person is postponed or discontinued, the trial of such person may take place before the same Court or any other Special Commission Court, and shall take place as soon as may be.

(6) In the event of a trial of a person taking place before another Special Commission Court, a new warrant shall be issued for the trial of such person.

(7) A commission appointing a Special Commission Court shall not be superseded or affected by the issue of another like commission, nor shall the sitting or jurisdiction of such Court be affected by the sitting of any such commission or of the Supreme Court of the Colony or the Circuit Court of the Protectorate.

(8) A Special Commission Court shall be a Court within the meaning of the Perjury Ordinance, 1896, and the Children (Criminal Law Amendment) Ordinance, 1910. <sup>No. 5 of 1896.  
No. 12 of 1910.</sup>

(9) The provisions of the Supreme Court Amendment Ordinance, 1912, shall not apply to a trial of a person by a Special Commission Court. <sup>No. 14 of 1912.</sup>

(10) An objection to the jurisdiction of a Special Commission Court to try a person in pursuance of a warrant under this Ordinance shall not be entertained by reason only of any want of form in the warrant, or of any

mistake in the name or description of such person in the warrant, if it is shown that the person tried is the person to whom the warrant relates ; and an objection to the proceedings of such Court for any want of form on the trial of any person shall not be entertained, if no injustice was thereby done to such person.

Procedure.

6.—(1) When a person is brought up for trial before a Special Commission Court, he shall be triable for any offence, being one, or connected with one, of the offences referred to in Section 2 of this Ordinance, disclosed by the depositions taken by the Court of the District Commissioner at the investigation of the charge, and the Special Commission Court shall inform such person specifically of the charge whereon he is to be tried, and shall record such charge in writing and call upon such person to plead thereto.

(2) At any time before the trial, on application by a person charged with an offence or by some person on his behalf, a copy of the written charge, if any, of the depositions and of the statement of such person so charged shall be supplied by the officer in whose custody the originals are deposited at the time of such application, for which a reasonable charge, not exceeding sixpence for every hundred words, may be made, or the same may be supplied without payment, as shall to the officer granting the application in his discretion seem expedient.

Depositions of absent witnesses when admissible.

7. The deposition of any witness taken by the Court of the District Commissioner at the investigation of the charge in the presence of the person charged, such person having had full opportunity of cross-examining such witness, may be given in evidence before a Special Commission Court if the witness be dead, or if the Court be satisfied that for any sufficient cause his attendance cannot be procured.

Audience of counsel.

8. Barristers and solicitors of the Supreme Court of the Colony and officers appointed by the Governor to prosecute shall be allowed to appear and be heard at the

trials of persons charged with offences before a Special Commission Court.

9. A Special Commission Court shall have power in capital cases to inflict punishment of death, and when a sentence of death has been passed, all the proceedings in the case shall with the least possible delay be forwarded, together with a report from the Special Commission Court, to the Governor, and no sentence of death shall be carried into effect except upon the warrant of the Governor and in the mode and in the place directed by him, and such warrant shall be the authority for carrying the same into effect.

10. A Special Commission Court shall send to the Governor a report of the cases of all persons convicted by such Court, and thereupon the power of deportation and expulsion conferred by sections 5 and 6 of the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Amendment Ordinance, 1912, shall extend to persons convicted by a Special Commission Court, and all the applicable provisions contained in Sections 13, 14 and 15 of the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Ordinance, 1909, and in Section 6 of the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Amendment Ordinance, 1912, shall extend to all persons deported or expelled under this Ordinance, and to all persons aiding or attempting to aid such deported or expelled persons unlawfully to return to the Colony or Protectorate, and to all persons unlawfully harbouring such deported or expelled persons.

11.—(1) If a person tried by a Special Commission Court shall be acquitted, but the Court shall be of opinion that it is expedient for the security, peace or order of the district in which the offence with which such person was charged took place, that such person should be expelled from such district, the said Court shall send to the Governor a report of the case, and thereupon it shall be lawful for the Governor-in-Council to make an order (in this Ordinance referred to as an expulsion order) requiring such person to leave the Colony or Protectorate

Power to  
inflict  
sentence of  
death.

Deporta-  
tion.

No. 17 of  
1912.

No. 28 of  
1909.

Power to  
expel  
persons  
even if  
acquitted.

within a time fixed by the order, and thereafter to remain out of the Colony and Protectorate.

(2) If any person in whose case an expulsion order has been made is at any time found within the Colony or Protectorate in contravention of the order, he shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding ten years.

(3) Any person aiding or attempting to aid any person, in whose case an expulsion order has been made, to return to the Colony or Protectorate, and any person harbouring such person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding two years.

Definition  
of unlaw-  
ful society.  
No. 17 of  
1912.

Extent of  
Ordinance.

Duration  
of Ordinance.

12. The expression "unlawful society" has the same meaning as in the Human Leopard and Alligator Societies Amendment Ordinance, 1912.

13. This Ordinance shall apply to the Colony and Protectorate.

14. This Ordinance shall continue in force until the expiration of one year next after the commencement thereof: Provided that the expiration of this Ordinance shall not affect the validity of anything done in pursuance of this Ordinance, and any person convicted under this Ordinance may be punished as if this Ordinance continued in force, and all prosecutions and other legal proceedings pending under this Ordinance at the time of the expiration thereof may be carried on, completed and carried into effect, and the sentences carried into execution as if this Ordinance had not expired.

#### SCHEDULE. (Section 4.)

Whereas by a commission dated the                      day of                      and issued under and by virtue of the Special Commission Court Ordinance, 1912, you have been appointed Special Commissioners to form a Special Commission Court for the trial in manner provided by

the said Ordinance of persons committed for trial before  
the Court of the for offences,  
in connection with unlawful societies ;

And whereas the persons whose names are set out in  
the Schedule hereto have been committed for trial before  
the Court of the for offences in  
connection with unlawful societies ;

Now I,  
Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of  
Sierra Leone, hereby assign to you the said Special  
Commissioners the duty of sitting at in  
the Protectorate (*or Colony*) of Sierra Leone, and of there,  
without a jury and not assisted by any native chief or  
non-native or native assessors, hearing and determining,  
according to law, the charges made against the persons  
whose names are set out in the Schedule hereto, and of  
doing therein what to justice appertains, and this shall  
be to you a sufficient warrant in that behalf.

Given under my hand this day of  
To

Governor.

#### SCHEDULE

Passed in the Legislative Council this Fifteenth day  
of November in the year of our Lord One thousand nine  
hundred and twelve.

F. A MILLER,  
Clerk of Legislative Council.

AN ORDINANCE to amend the Special Commission  
Ordinance, 1912

No. 21 OF 1912.

Be it enacted by the Governor of the Colony of Sierra  
Leone, with the advice and consent of the Legislative  
Council thereof, as follows :—

1. This Ordinance may be cited as the Special Com- Short title.  
mission Court (Amendment) Ordinance, 1912.

Various  
amend-  
ments in  
No. 18 of  
1912.

2. The Special Commission Ordinance, 1912, is hereby amended,

- (1) In section 1, by inserting the word "Court" after the word "Commission."
- (2) By adding at the end of subsection (5) of section 2 the following paragraph :—  

"In all other matters the decision or opinion of the Court shall be according to the decision or opinion of a majority of the members of the Court."
- (3) In line 3 of section 3, by inserting the word "triable" after the word "offences," and in line 8 of the same section by substituting the words "reasonable cause" for the words "unavoidable absence."
- (4) In subsection (10) of section 5, by inserting the words "to be" before the word "tried" in line 5 thereof.
- (5) In section 6, by inserting the words "which may in the opinion of the Court be" after the word "Ordinance" in line 4 thereof.
- (6) In section 9, by inserting the words "the notes of evidence and" after the word "passed" in line 2 thereof, and by inserting after the word "case" in line 3 thereof the words "or copies thereof certified under the hand of the Assistant Master."
- (7) In subsection (3) of section 11, by inserting the word "unlawfully" before the word "harbouring" in line 3 thereof.
- (8) By inserting the word "To" at the beginning of the Schedule, by transferring the words "given under my hand this                      day of Governor" in lines 19 and 20 of the Schedule to the end of the Schedule to the Schedule, and by striking out the word "To" in line 22 of the Schedule.

3. An officer appointed by the Governor to prosecute Powers of Crown Prosecutor. at the trials of persons charged with offences before a Special Commission Court shall, for the purposes of such trials, have the same rights and powers as the Attorney-General.

4. The following section shall be substituted for section Duration of Ordinance. 14 of the Special Commission Court Ordinance, 1912 :—

“ 14. This Ordinance shall continue in force until the expiration of one year next after the commencement thereof : Provided that the expiration of this Ordinance shall not affect the validity of anything done in pursuance of, nor the continuing validity of any deportation or expulsion under this Ordinance, nor the liability to punishment of any persons committing an offence under sections 10 and 11 hereof, and any person convicted under this Ordinance may be punished as if this Ordinance continued in force, and all prosecutions and other legal proceedings pending under this Ordinance at the time of the expiration thereof may be carried on, completed and carried into effect, and the sentences carried into execution, and deportation and expulsion orders made, as if this Ordinance had not expired.”

5. This Ordinance shall apply to the Colony and Protectorate. Extent of Ordinance.

Passed in the Legislative Council this Thirteenth day of December, in the year of Our Lord One thousand nine hundred and twelve.

F. A. MILLER,  
Clerk of Legislative Council.



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